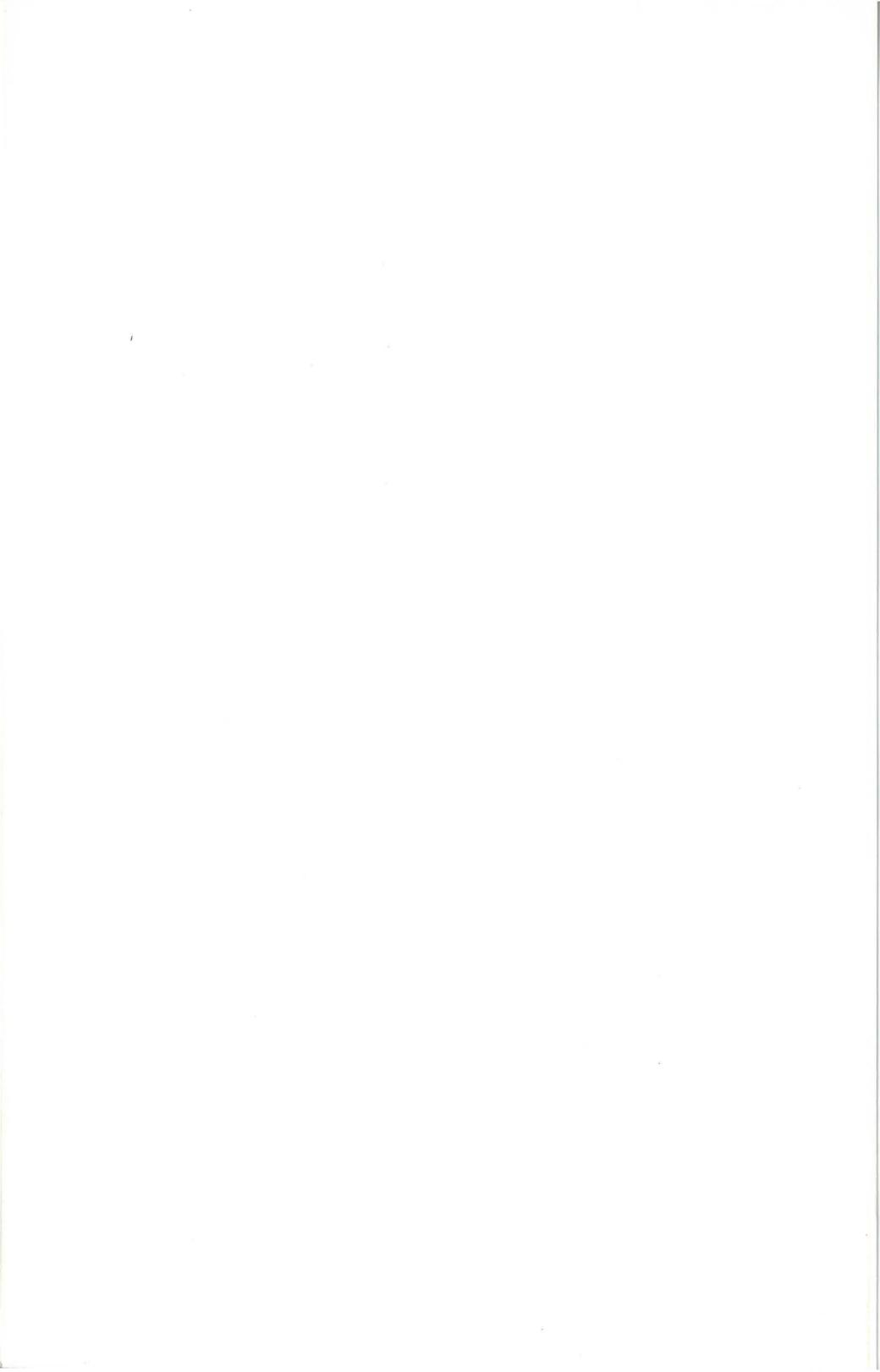


**FOUNDATIONS
OF
MENNONITE
BRETHREN
MISSIONS**

G.W. PETERS



Foundations of Mennonite Brethren Missions

BY G.W. PETERS

General Editor: Paul G. Hiebert



Hillsboro, Kansas, U.S.A.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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PREFACE

The Mennonite Brethren, representing a small segment of the Christian world, have been strongly involved in missionary outreach throughout their 124 year history. Around the world, Mennonite Brethren now number over 130,000 members in fifteen countries. The North American segment, the largest missionary base, represents more than 40,000; the Russian membership is an estimated 25,000, while the immigrant membership in South America numbers several thousand. The remaining 60,000 are the fruit of missionary endeavor around the world. The current annual Board of Missions and Services budget, representing the North American outreach to other continents is between five and six million dollars.

This volume, the third in a missions series, is designed to update the story of Mennonite Brethren missions and church growth. The first, "The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America" by J.J. Toews, appeared in 1975. The second, "The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire" by J.B. Toews, followed in 1978. This volume, by G.W. Peters, is designed to outline the philosophy and principles of missions followed by the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The author of this volume, Dr. G.W. Peters, is a well-known specialist in missions. He has served on the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services for many years; he was Professor of Missions at Dallas Theological Seminary; now retired, he serves as consultant and speaker on missions to many groups around the world. He is the author of a number of books on missions. We are grateful that Dr. Peters consented to write this volume, recognizing that his experience and expertise add valuable insights into the study of the philosophy and principles of missions.

We acknowledge with thanks the editorial help of Phyllis Martens and Don Ratzlaff in preparing the manuscript for publication. We also want to thank Herbert Giesbrecht,

librarian at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg,
for preparing the index.

The publishers of this volume trust that it will provide information and inspiration, thereby maintaining the interest of Christians, Mennonite Brethren in particular, in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the farthest reaches of the world.

Helmut T. Huebert, Chairman
The Board of Christian Literature

INTRODUCTION

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

The history of a people is in a large measure the history of their vision. In this volume Dr. Peters traces for us the vision which, more than any other, bound the Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren churches into a single conference. To be sure, matters of theology, church polity, education and publications have united the churches in concerted action, but none of these has so encapsulated the vision and the energies of the Mennonite Brethren as has mission.

But visions are elusive things. At times they are expressed in the insights a leader has about the times, and the dream that person has for his or her people. At times they are found in the deep sense of the call of God that motivates individuals to leave home and land for almost certain death for the sake of the gospel. And at times visions are the fundamental commitments of a church or conference that motivate it to action and guide its decisions. It is not always easy to resolve the tensions that arise when these visions conflict — when people disagree over the fundamental convictions that motivate their lives.

It is not enough to have a vision, for visions, like spirits, must be discerned. Not all are of God. As Dr. Peters points out, the Mennonite Brethren have been well aware of this and have used the Scriptures as understood within the consensus of committed believers as the measure to test all visions. This has kept them from deviating far from the task to which Christ has called them, and from many of the fads that have swept missions in the past. There may have been disagreements on specific strategies and actions, but not on the foundation of missions.

Moreover, a vision can be lost. Institutionalization threatens to lower our sight from the goals beyond to the task at hand, from ministering to the world to maintaining the organization itself. It is all too easy to lose sight of lost and needy people in the midst of all the activities carried out in the name of mission. And a vision can be lost in the swirl of life as other visions call for our attention. For a vision to lead a people, it must be kept in focus and it must be constantly renewed.

Histories are not events, but the interpretation of events. Dr. Peters seeks to give us the broader meaning of the Mennonite Brethren mission movement as one chapter in God's redemptive history. Not everyone will agree with parts of his interpretation, but they must take it seriously.

The purpose of such a history is not only to warm our hearts, but also to give us a perspective by which we can evaluate the present with its problems and principles to guide our decisions. This demands that we take a critical look at history, not to distract from those who have gone before, but to learn from their experiences so that we may avoid the pitfalls of the past. We need to remember that people work within the context of their times and cultures, but this should not keep us from critically evaluating their methods and actions.

This volume is written primarily as a textbook for use in courses in missions, but its comprehensive survey of the Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren mission scenes in North America makes it a valuable resource for those interested in the history of these churches and those seeking to develop missiological principles and strategies for our day.

— Paul G. Hiebert
General Editor

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

You are about to read the exciting and challenging story of the beginnings of a mission to the world. Be prepared to think of a sweep of 120 years (1860 to 1980), during which a relatively small group of churches sought to reach around the globe with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This book is concerned primarily with the foundation, the beginnings, of this endeavor of the Mennonite Brethren Conference, first in Russia, but primarily as a sending agency in North America.

Examining the historical records has convinced this author that the missionary motivation of the brotherhood was intense, their goal usually specific, their priorities largely scriptural, and their will to sacrifice genuine and strong. The brotherhood has endeavored to serve the Lord, take the Great Commission seriously and in the unity of the Spirit play sincerely its role in world missions.

The early brethren had few precedents to follow, but they were quick to learn. In some ways they displayed a creative genius, setting patterns for others to follow. As a whole they have few things for which to apologize. This should not be interpreted to mean that the work they left behind is perfect: flaws are evident, as they are in every human endeavor. The author has from time to time pointed out what he believes to be mistakes, not to be critical in a negative sense, but to clear the way for more constructive patterns. No evaluation is intended to embarrass the brotherhood, the board, or any individual.

The present volume is not a complete report of the foreign ministries of the Mennonite Brethren. A more detailed story, especially of the later years, which are touched on only briefly here, can be found in other volumes (see bibliography). Here we

are concerned with the development of mission within the structure of the brotherhood; the awakening and nurture of mission interest; the theology, philosophy, organization, legislation, administration, and expansion of the foreign missionary enterprise.

Three areas of research presented special difficulties. First was obtaining reliable sources for the years 1860 to 1935. Much of the material on the work of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia, for example, had to be collected from widely scattered sources, much of it coming from people's memories and personal notes and letters. The most comprehensive sources were the files of the Baptist Missionary Union in New York; P.M. Friesen's book *Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland*; interviews with John G. Wiens and Cornelius Unruh, both missionaries to India, and with elder Gerhard Regier, the last secretary-treasurer of the Committee for Foreign Missions in Russia.

The early records of foreign missions outreach from North America were also not easily obtained. The original official sources and files of the board up to 1935 were destroyed by fire. It was difficult to "patch together" the development of mission from conference records, reports in the *Zionsbote*, personal correspondence, interviews and diaries. Even when available, many official minutes are skimpy and sketchy. Office documents, reports of personal dialogue with statements, commitments, implications and intentions, do not cast much additional light. May justice have been done to history and to the brotherhood.

A second complicating factor is that several significant developments are too recent to be reliably recorded or evaluated. They can be set down as *events*, but not as *history*. The fact that several of the former secretaries are serving in the brotherhood has been helpful; their personal word has helped to clarify many of the obscure sections and brief notes in board minutes, or the more drastic actions of the board. They interpreted much official correspondence and gave meaning to records and statements. This procedure, however, put the author in the strange position of accepting personal recollections and interpretations of meaning and intention to augment the bare records, which in themselves often had little

significance. Intention and implication are not always self-evident in brotherhood correspondence, and private dialogue may be reported only in vague notes. Such a situation is common in a brotherhood experience, however, and must not be misread. All related personnel have been very open, helpful, cordial and cooperative. Many thanks to them!

A third complication is the author's personal relationship to the board. Correspondence with N.N. Hiebert (secretary of the board) dates back to 1930. For the same years much valuable historical information was obtained through interviews with the secretary and the chairman of the board. Personal friendship and correspondence was continued with later secretaries, H.W. Lohrenz, A.E. Janzen, and J.B. Toews. Private studies and research under the tutelage of H.W. Lohrenz further aided my understanding of the early history and development of Mennonite Brethren missions.

Because of my prolonged and deep involvement in the mission enterprise, it is difficult to become dissociated from personal experiences and observations and to write only as a researcher. Much of this book will read and sound like the voice of an insider. Such a position has the advantage of knowing how a thing was meant and not only how it was said or written. The disadvantage is that both the presentation and evaluation of data may be less objective than an historical work ought to be. Words like "seemed," "impressed," "opinion," are frequently injected to compensate.

Writing this book, hazardous and difficult as it may have been, has strengthened my bond with and appreciation for the brotherhood. The prospects for Mennonite Brethren foreign mission enterprise remain positive. The will and resources for ongoing, even adventurous, missions seem to be present in the congregations. It will require vision, ingenuity and aggressiveness on the part of the board to capture and put to work what is present in the constituency.

Missions is a demanding enterprise. It is not static, an establishment that seeks to maintain itself, but a living institution with a steady purpose, an unchanging message, an expanding horizon. It does, however, require continuous adjustments in a dynamic society in order to keep up with ever-changing demands and new situations. — G.W. Peters

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INFLUENCES TOWARD MISSIONS

When the Mennonite Brethren Church observed its centennial in 1960, it could look back over more than a century of existence as a separate conference in the midst of the larger Mennonite brotherhood.¹

Secession: The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia

The Mennonite Brethren Church emerged out of a widespread evangelical, pietistic awakening in the separatist German-Lutheran and the Dutch-Prussian Mennonite settlements in South Russia.² The Mennonites had settled in the Ukraine at the close of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries in two large, closed colonies. These settlements were Chortitza colony, with the village of Chortitza as the center, and the Molotschna colony, with Halbstadt as the administrative and cultural center. From these two mother colonies additional settlements resulted: by World War 1, fifty settlements consisting of 400 villages and estates had sprung up, stretching all the way from the Black Sea in the south to the huge steppes of Siberia.³

The Mennonites had settled in the Ukraine upon the invitation of the Russian government. They were given attractive economic advantages, colony self-administration, educational and religious freedom, and exemption from military responsibilities.⁴ They were forbidden, however, to propagate their faith among non-Mennonite peoples, particularly the Russian populace; to make converts; to receive non-Mennonite converts into their churches; or to establish Mennonite churches among the Russian people.⁵ No individual not born to a Mennonite family was permitted to become a Mennonite or join a Mennonite church.⁶

Such restrictions on the part of the government must not be interpreted as anti-Christian in attitude, neither was this merely a legal matter. It was the expression of a religious concern by the Tsar, for he was the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, the protector and benefactor of the faith. The Russian people were his spiritual children, and the Tsar's oath demanded their religious care and protection.⁷

The Russian government's invitation to the Mennonites in western Europe, particularly those in Prussia, was an appealing offer of unrestricted prosperity and restricted religious propaganda. Settlement in Russia, therefore, led to economic and cultural expansion, and at the same time to a deepening of religious self-containment which in large segments of the Mennonite community deteriorated into religious stagnation and eventual spiritual decay. Only a minority were able to linger longer than others and survive spiritual and moral disintegration. Into this situation the Lord graciously sent the awakening out of which grew the Mennonite Brethren Church.⁸

Frustrated by spiritual conditions in the churches, eighteen brethren met on January 6, 1860, in the village of Elisabeththal in the Molotschna colony, to draw up a lengthy statement of concern. For all practical purposes this became a document of secession.⁹

The action was taken in a revival atmosphere of a somewhat puritanical, Methodist tinge. Meant to enlighten and sharpen the conscience and to heighten the sense of sin, the document is colored by moralism, if not legalism, in its demands for moral reform and discipline in the churches. Principally, the brethren protested against the silence of the church leadership over prevailing demoralizing religious, social and economic conditions in the Mennonite colonies. An entangling religio-politico-economic church-colony system had grown up,¹⁰ which demoralized the constituency, paralyzed the church leadership, and threatened to choke all spiritual life and fellowship in the community. The lengthy secession document spells out the moral ills of the communities as these brethren saw them, and the grievance of the signators. It also refers to what seemed to the men to be remedies for the situation.¹¹

The seceding brethren felt strongly that their undertaking was a most strenuous attempt to recapture and reestablish the

original Anabaptist-Mennonite Church, as the secession document convincingly indicates. They believed that this church had been built upon New Testament foundations and represented the precepts and patterns of our Lord and his apostles. (They seem to have been little aware of the strong Herrnhuter and Württemburg pietistic influences upon their attitudes and actions.)

This group, called the Mennonite Brethren to distinguish it from other Mennonite groups, became the seedbed for a missions enterprise that soon germinated, then grew and flourished with surprising vigor. In a sense both church and mission began on that historic day in 1860. Yet the matter is not that simple.

Dynamic movements are always complex. They are not easy to explain, for they involve the workings of dynamic forces within an historic background. No single cause will account for a movement such as missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church. While the Word of God, specifically the life and command of Christ, were basic to the interest in missions, the Holy Spirit used various historical, spiritual and cultural factors to ignite the fuel of Word and biblical heritage into a brightly burning flame.

Before detailing the sprouting of missions interest among the Mennonite Brethren, let us look at some general evangelical movements in Russia, especially as they fanned out from Germany.

German evangelical movements into Russia

It must not be supposed that the Mennonite colonists in Russia were totally unaware of the concept of missions. Their missionary heritage had never completely receded. Their literature reminded them of the things their spiritual fathers had accomplished in evangelism. Furthermore, to suppose that they were totally ignorant of the rapidly spreading Baptist movement in Germany is to attribute to them a backwardness below their dignity and position in society. After all, the Baptists were spreading in Germany in the 1830s, 1840s, 1850s and on like a prairie fire, stirring no small public controversy with the official church.¹²

Clearly, the Mennonites were also not unaware of the

spiritual stirrings created by such Roman Catholic evangelicals of the early 19th century in Bavaria as Johann Michael Sailer, Martin Boos, and particularly Johannes Evangelista Gossner and Ignaz Lindl. The latter two went to Russia, Lindl in 1819 and Gossner in 1820, and transplanted the revival to St. Petersburg (Leningrad) and somewhat later to Odessa.¹³

In St. Petersburg Dr. Paterson, a Scottish representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society, had succeeded in organizing a Bible Society which the Russian Tsar himself joined. The society also had members from the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church. The objective of the society was to translate the Bible from the ancient Slavic language into Russian and to make a Bible available to every family in Russia. The Tsar donated 10,000 rubles to the project and presented the society with buildings in St. Petersburg and Moscow.¹⁴

The society, which had been unofficially known as the St. Petersburg Society, became in 1813 the Bible Society of Russia. The actual translation of the Scriptures proceeded rapidly. The Gospels were published in 1819, the New Testament in 1823, and the Old Testament up to the book of Ruth in 1825. Thus a good beginning was made.¹⁵ All seemed well and progress was good. But the hour for Russia seemingly had not yet come, or else the enemy of truth found occasion to block progress: for a sudden reaction set in.

The real cause for the reaction was ultra-conservatism, always hostile to innovation. The immediate occasion for the reaction was the rapid spread of a distorted doctrine of the soon return of the Lord to set up his millennial kingdom, as taught by some Pietists, propagated widely by evangelists and evangelicals, and almost hysterically embraced by many German pietistic colonists in Russia. As a result Lindl was compelled to leave Russia in 1823 and Gossner in 1824; though evangelist Werner, a warmhearted and enthusiastic German Pietist, was permitted to carry on the work of Lindl in Odessa for many years.¹⁶ Disbanded in 1826 under the pretext that sufficient Bibles had been made available to the people, the Bible Society of Russia was granted a limited function under the name Evangelical Bible Society.¹⁷

There existed other missions activities among certain

ethnic populations. In 1806 some Scottish missionaries had received permission to propagate the gospel among the Jewish people in Russia. The first missionaries settled in Odessa and from there initiated a ministry among the Jews in a number of places.¹⁸ Missionaries of the Basel *Missionsgesellschaft* (Basel Missionary Society), which had been organized in 1815, entered Russia in 1818 via Odessa. With the permission of the government, granted in 1821, they fanned out over large areas of South Russia to evangelize the numerous non-Russian, Muslim and pagan peoples in the vast empire to the south. The first mission field of the Basel Missionary Society was mainly in the Caucasian area. Such men as Saltet and Benzner (1820) and Zaremba (1821) — a Russian nobleman who had been converted in Germany, greatly influenced by the writings of Jung-Stilling, and trained in Basel and Dittrich — were dispatched to serve as missionaries. Somewhat later Heinrich Benz, Friedrich Hohenacker and Jakob Lang appeared and began a considerable work in evangelism and institutions.¹⁹

The reaction of the mid-1820s soon caught up with the Basel mission. By 1835 the privilege which had been secured by Zaremba in 1821 was withdrawn, and mission activities were limited to German settlers.²⁰

These ministries, though curtailed, left some blessed footprints among the people of Russia. The New Testament had been translated and could now be read by the common people if they were fortunate enough to secure a copy of it. The *Stundismus* (informal home Bible study group) was introduced by Gossner, the Roman Catholic evangelist, in St. Petersburg and almost simultaneously by Lindl in Odessa and Bessarabia among the many German colonists.²¹ From here they spread into numerous localities, so that eventually this became one of the most effective methods of evangelism in Russia. The roots of the *Bibelstunden* (Bible studies) in the Mennonite Brethren churches must be found in the Wuerttemburg and Bayern pietism, which in turn goes back to Philip Jakob Spener, the father of pietism.

Of special significance to the building of a missionary mentality was the ministry of Johann Bonekemper, a German pietist who took up residence in Rohrbach, a German pietistic settlement in South Russia. Here he standardized the *Stun-*

dismus by giving it form and strong biblical content. He also carried on for twenty-four years an energetic ministry which resulted in the revival not only of evangelical fervor, but also of missionary vision. The *Stundismus* spread to numerous other German colonies. In 1849 Bonekemper settled in Turkey to continue his missionary activity among the Muslims, returning to Germany in 1853.²²

Though little documentation is available to establish how this evangelistic missionary movement affected the Mennonites, it is unnatural to suppose that none of it penetrated the colonies to influence their mood and thinking. What the Mennonites' own missionary heritage was, we shall now consider in some detail.

Missionary heritage of the Mennonites

While the secession document does not specifically mention missions as an objective, it does confirm that the founding fathers were immersed in Anabaptist-Mennonite literature, particularly the writings of Menno Simons. The seceding brethren felt they were returning to original Anabaptist-Mennonite principles and to New Testament teaching and practice. To borrow Dr. Littell's expression, theirs was a "restitution" church.²³ I prefer to think of it as a "reconstituted" church — remade, but with the addition of new ingredients.

The return to Anabaptist-Mennonitism was also a return to witnessing, evangelism and missions; for evangelism was a prominent if not the dominant quality of 16th-century Anabaptism. Its foremost leaders were without exception fervent evangelists. The activity at an Anabaptist synod in Augsburg, Germany, in August, 1527, is a case in point. Here more than sixty Anabaptist leaders met in consultation. Eager to design a strategy for the evangelization of Central Europe, they assigned missionaries to Basel and Zurich, the Palatinate, Upper Austria, Franconia, Salzburg and Bavaria.²⁴ Littell speaks of it as a "Missionary Synod where the brethren divided the land on a grand map of evangelical enterprise."²⁵ Just what the synod accomplished cannot be established. Interestingly, the synod became known as the "Martyr's Synod" because most of the delegates soon died a martyr's death.

A chronicler of the early Brethren in Moravia reports on their missionary activities:

The Christian mission work is carried on among us according to the command of Christ: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" and again: "I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go forth and bring fruit." Accordingly, ministers of the gospel and their assistants are annually sent forth into the various countries to those who desire to amend their lives and are asking for the truth. Such are brought to the brotherhood in Moravia, in spite of hangman and headsman, notwithstanding the fact that many were apprehended while on their way to Moravia and suffered martyrdom.²⁶

Not only the leaders were evangelists. Lay evangelism was practiced extensively by the early Anabaptists, who taught that the mandate of the Great Commission applied for all time and to all believers until all nations would honor Christ as Savior and Lord. "The Anabaptists were among the first to make the Commission binding upon all church members. In their organization, the promise to go where sent was part of the ceremony of admission to the *True Church*.²⁷ Christ's church, they felt, must be as universal as are his lordship and promise of salvation: to this end every ounce of energy and every member of the church must be dedicated. Only such commitment can account for the rapid spread of early Anabaptism.²⁸

The Great Commission was, in fact, central to Anabaptist thinking — so central that discipleship was always expressed through obedience to the Commission.²⁹ The early Anabaptist writers refer more than 160 times to the Great Commission as recorded in the first three gospels.³⁰ Admittedly, they often quoted the passage not because of its missions implications, but to prove that baptism is to follow faith rather than precede it. However, not all references are polemic in intent. A goodly number clearly indicate that the Great Commission was a present imperative for Anabaptists, and that the preaching of the gospel everywhere and to everyone was considered binding upon all followers of Christ. Evangelism and mission were for them not an option, but a sacred responsibility. They lived in a *Sendungsbewusstsein* — a consciousness of having been sent.³¹ Thus they became a "pilgrim church, a missionary

church, a martyr's church."³²

Anabaptists interpreted the Commission in several ways.

(1) The *manner* of gospel propagation — the gospel is to be preached. It cannot be forced upon anyone. People must be persuaded. The sword can cut down the body of a person, but it cannot convince the conscience or convert him or her. Christianity rests upon voluntarism. Therefore, preaching is upheld in contrast to compulsion and enforcement.

(2) The *urgency* of gospel propagation — it is to be preached because Christ has commanded his people to preach. He is Lord and his bidding must be obeyed. On the other hand, the gospel must be preached because without it humanity is lost. The gospel is God's remedy for humanity's ills, sin and guilt. Only as the gospel is preached can a person find salvation. Gospel proclamation is the source of faith.

(3) The *order* of the gospel experience — the gospel must be preached, it must be believed, and only upon faith are people to be baptized. This was the order of the Christian experience the Anabaptists taught and practiced; for this they suffered and died.

A careful study of the usage of the passages will show that for all Anabaptists, the Commission was not so much a legalistic authority as a guide and pattern. Menno Simons, in whom the Mennonites found their particular orientation, referred to Matthew's commission scores of times. He reiterated the importance of the order:

Firstly, Christ said, go forth into the whole world, preach the gospel to every creature. Secondly, He said, whoever believes, thirdly, and is baptized, the same shall be saved. This order must be maintained if a true Christianity is to be prepared, and though the whole world rage against it. Where it isn't maintained there is also no Christian community of God, but of the devil, and thereby of the whole world, and all false Christians who live after it in their topsy-turvy order, and flight perversely.³³

Of his own passion for evangelism he wrote:

In the second place we seek and desire with yearning, ardent hearts, at the cost of our life and blood, that the holy gospel of Jesus Christ and His apostles, which alone is the true doctrine and will remain until Jesus Christ will come again in the clouds, may be taught and preached throughout

all the world, as the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples in His last words which He addressed to them on earth.

This is my only joy and the desire of my heart that I may extend the borders of the kingdom of God, make known the truth, reprove sin, teach righteousness, feed the hungry souls with the Word of the Lord, lead the stray sheep into the right path and win many souls for the Lord through His Spirit, power, and grace. Therefore we seek, to the extent of our opportunity, to make known and proclaim to all mankind the grace of God which has appeared, and His great love toward us, that they may experience with the same joy and renewing of the Spirit, and know and taste with all saints how sweet and good and kind the Lord is to Whom we have come. To this end we preach as much as opportunity and possibility affords, both daytime and by night, in houses and in fields, in forests and wildernesses, in this land and abroad, in prison and bonds, in the water, the fire and on the scaffold, on the gallows and upon the wheel, before lords and princes, orally and by writing, at the risk of possessions and life, as we have done these many years without ceasing.³⁴

This then was the Mennonite missions heritage: the fervent activity of the early Anabaptists, the binding of the Great Commission on all church members, and the passionate statements of Menno Simons himself.

Much of the original momentum was lost in the ensuing centuries. Material prosperity choked spiritual vitality, while formalism paralyzed and institutionalized the church. In Russia, the socio-economic-cultural conditions had a stranglehold on the colonies at the expense of a spiritual and concerned brotherhood. Theology turned into dead traditional orthodoxy in Prussia and Russia, or became cancerous with rationalism in Holland and North Germany.³⁵ Never, however, were the original vision of the lost world, the initial glow of evangelism, and the spiritual sense of mission completely lost. Smoldering embers flickered up now and then. Total deadness never overcame the whole Anabaptist-Mennonite constituency in Europe, for there was always a true and faithful remnant. The hunger for God, the thirst for his Word and the concern for lost persons never totally disappeared. They continue today.

Evangelism in the form of foreign missions first crystalized among the *Doopsgezinde* (minded to baptize) churches in Holland.³⁶ It gained its greatest impetus in Europe, however,

among the Mennonites in South Russia, especially among those who eventually constituted the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The revival of missionary interest

The great awakening which the Lord graciously sent into the colonies during the 1830s to 1850s progressively rekindled the lost passion of the forebears. The Holy Spirit breathed new life into dead bones; liberty and liberality burst through strangling structures. People were reborn, lives transformed, hearts were strangely warmed, visions were clarified, compassion was intensified, evangelism and missions revived. Anabaptism in its early glow was reappearing in a new garb of dynamic intensity.

The providential placing of the Gnadenfeld Church

The Moravian Brethren began mission work as early as 1732 by sending some of their members forth as “foreign evangelists.” Under the influence and leadership of Count Von Zinzendorf (Nikolaus Ludwig, 1700-1760), they developed an indomitable missions zeal and a spirit of heroism in foreign missions work unparalleled by that of any other missionary movement.³⁷

Under the providence of God, this zeal, along with some Herrenhuter teachings, was carried over into the Mennonite communities of Russia along two different channels. It came first through a teacher called from Prussia to teach in the newly established *Zentralschule* (high school) in Ohrloff. Tobias Voth was born in 1791 in Prussia into a Mennonite family and later became a member of the Mennonite Church. In 1818 he was soundly converted through Jung-Stilling’s writings, which were known widely among the Pietists and Mennonites.³⁸ These writings greatly influenced him and prepared him for a ministry in Ohrloff.

The writings of Jung-Stilling³⁹ have a four-fold emphasis: first, that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ and that a conscious and radical conversion to him is an absolute prerequisite to such salvation; second, that there is a fullness of life, power and joy in Jesus Christ which comes only to those who

wholeheartedly yield to him; third, that the personal return of the Lord in glory and power to establish his earthly kingdom is imminent — the millennium in which the saints and restored Israel are to play a significant role for the benefit of all nations; and fourth, that world missions is imperative. He is described by Jakob Schmitt in *Die Gnade Bricht Durch* as a "Man of Missions."⁴⁰ Though Jung-Stilling died in 1817, before most of the larger continental missions societies were organized, his writings did much to facilitate organization of and participation in mission, particularly among the Pietists.

Tobias Voth's interest in Jung-Stilling was further nurtured in his fellowship with the Pietists of Brenkenhofswalde, whom we later meet as the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church in South Russia. Here in Brenkenhofswalde he also came into contact with the Moravian Brethren and learned more about missions from them.⁴¹ Voth carried this missions interest to Russia, where he filled an important position as a teacher in a strategic centre of Mennonite thought and movement. He was utterly loyal to Mennonite doctrine and life, pietistic in spiritual warmth and fellowship, and Moravian Brethren in mission vision, emphasis and propagation.

He gave himself energetically to his new assignment in Ohrloff, but also found time for spiritual interests. He established Bible and mission study groups and introduced annual mission festivals. He kept in close touch with the Moravian Mission headquarters, at Herrenhut conveyed friendly greetings from the Mennonite churches of South Russia. Through him Moravian missionary literature filtered into the Molotschna colony, and the prominent Ohrloff Church was greatly influenced for the good. Thus an important bridge was built and the windows were opened more widely to wholesome outside influences.⁴²

A second and more direct flow came through the Gnadenfeld Church. This church, prior to its migration to South Russia in 1835 from Brenkenhofswalde, West Prussia, had enjoyed the closest fellowship with the Moravian Brethren. It included in its membership a goodly number of Pietists from among the Lutherans. Because of this cordial relationship, the church enjoyed frequent visits and teaching from the Moravian Brethren. Through them the church gained

a better knowledge of the Scriptures, a more vital Christianity, and an understanding love for missions and education.⁴³

Some years earlier Tobias Voth had come from this church. Later pastor Eduard Wuest found here an open door for his missions interests. Even before 1850, weekly prayer meetings and missions studies during the winter months resulted in annual missions festivals. The elders of the Gnadenfeld church, Wilhelm Lange and August Lenzman, were men of God rooted in the Word and interested in missions.⁴⁴

A group from this Gnadenfeld Church later seceded to form the nucleus of the Mennonite Brethren Church, thus carrying the missions spirit over into the new movement and making it a missions church from the very beginning. In fact, the Mennonite Brethren were a missions people before they were a separate church.

The Mennonite churches of Alexanderwohl, Gnadenfeld and Ohrloff are mentioned early in reports of missions stirrings and contributions.⁴⁵ Significantly, the first missionary to leave from the Russian Mennonites for a foreign mission field did not come from the Mennonite Brethren churches, but from the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church. The elder Heinrich Dirks labored in the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), arriving in Batavia (Jakarta) in February, 1870, and establishing a mission in North Sumatra. He was fully supported by his home church, the Mennonite Church of Gnadenfeld.⁴⁶ Two other couples from the same church responded to the missions challenge later and served many years in Indonesia.⁴⁷

The influence of Heinrich Dirks was felt deeply in the Mennonite Brethren churches, and his impact intensified the missionary urge. It can be stated frankly that the interrelationship between the Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Brethren churches in later years greatly fructified the missionary concern in both movements. It also served to heal many wounds caused during the formative years of the Mennonite Brethren Church.⁴⁸

The inspiring example of the Dutch Mennonite churches

Because of economic and social factors, the Mennonites of Holland pressed forward faster in education, philanthropy and

missionary work in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than did their brethren in other countries. In 1709 they organized the "Committee for Foreign Needs,"⁵⁰ which sent large sums of money to the Swiss Mennonites and helped many in America.⁵¹ In 1780 the "Society for the Extension of Knowledge and for the Establishment of the Christian Religion" was organized.⁵¹

As early as July 1, 1824,⁵² the Dutch Mennonites organized an association to provide funds for the English Baptists in their mission undertakings. The organization was known as *Nederlandsche Afdeeling van het Zendelinggenootschap der Baptisten in England*.⁵³ Toward the end of the second quarter of the century, however, the interest began to wane, and it seemed as though the association would come to an end.

The real reason for the lost of interest seems to have been the energetic activities of the Baptists of Germany. After his baptism in 1834, J.G. Oncken of Hamburg, Germany, initiated an aggressive Baptist evangelistic movement. But it was strongly opposed by the official German church. Remembering their formerly difficult and harsh experiences, as well as their present pleasant relationships with the official Dutch Reformed Church of Holland, the Dutch Mennonites feared that identification with the German Baptist movement could create new difficulties for them. It could also multiply hardships of the Mennonites in Germany, particularly in Prussia, where already there was a lot of tension.

The directors of the Mennonite association in Amsterdam consulted the Baptist headquarters in England and decided to reorganize the mission endeavors of the Mennonites of Holland. The upshot was the creation of an independent Mennonite mission society known by the unwieldy name, *Vereeniging van Doopsgezinden tot bevordering der Evangelieverspreiding, voornamelijk in de Nederlandsche Overzeesche Bezittingen*, or Association of the Mennonites for the Proclamation of the Gospel in Netherland's Overseas Possessions.⁵⁴ The organization took place on January 18, 1848, and functioned under the chairmanship of Samuel Muller.

In July, 1851, only two years after the organization was born, a missionary by the name of Pieter Jansz was sent to Indonesia. Jansz was a qualified teacher and for such services

was accepted by the society. On November 15, 1851, he arrived in Batavia (Jakarta) and started teaching on a Dutch plantation in Japara, near Semarang, in north central Java. His course, however, soon changed. Today he is remembered in Indonesia for translating the Bible into Javanese. A large portrait of him is found in the headquarters of the Bible Society of Indonesia in Jakarta.⁵⁵ When he died in 1904, his work was successfully carried on by his eldest son Pieter Anthonie Jansz.

The news that Mennonites in Holland were moving into mission work was well received by the Mennonites in Germany and Russia and gave new impetus to missions interest. It must be admitted, however, that prejudices against the Dutch Mennonites were not easily overcome. Their unorthodox theological position and their departure from the doctrine of conscientious objection to participation in military service were well known to other Mennonites of Europe and were not appreciated. Yet C.J. van der Smissen of Friedrichstadt and J. Mannhardt of Danzig, men who were trusted among the Mennonite churches of Germany and Russia, did much to remove suspicion and to promote missions successfully in these communities. As early as 1853 contributions which until then had been sent to various other societies in Germany began to be channeled to the missions treasury of the new Mennonite mission in Holland. The churches at Liebenau, Ladekopp and Gnadenfeld in Russia are specifically mentioned in the correspondence of the 1850s.

Despite this, the Mennonites of Russia remained aloof in their relationship with the Dutch mission society. When Heinrich Dirks of Russia was sent to Batavia in 1871, he opened a new mission field near the *Rheinische Mission* in Sumatra rather than on Java with the Dutch Mennonites. Elder Dirks had been schooled at this mission; therefore, he felt more comfortable with the German Lutheran Pietists than with the Dutch Mennonites.⁵⁶

Theological tensions and cultural distance were never completely overcome. Nevertheless, the Mennonites of Russia provided the Dutch Mennonite mission society with five mission couples and three single women for Java. They also sent seven couples to Pakanten in the area of Tapanuli, Sumatra.⁵⁷ No

Mennonite Brethren personnel joined the Dutch mission, though some of their money did go to this society.

Whatever our present evaluation of and relationship to Dutch Mennonitism may be, this much is certain: at the time, it provided a pattern, set a noble example, and motivated participation in an independent Mennonite mission. This beginning of a distinctively Mennonite missionary movement resulted in the organization of numerous distinct Mennonite missions agencies and in the sending forth of hundreds of missionaries into almost every part of the world. As a result today's Mennonite community is multiracial — about 40 percent of the world Mennonite community is the fruit of Mennonite missionary ministries.⁵⁸ The Mennonite missionary movement owes a great debt to the daring vision and inspiring example of the Dutch Mennonites. They proved it could be done.

The revival ministry of Eduard Wuest, a Wuerttemberg pietist

Seldom do restoration movements arise without some dynamic, innovative person at the center. The origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church is no exception, with Eduard Wuest the immediate stimulator, though not the cause of the revival or of eventual secession.

The influence of Eduard Wuest has been variously evaluated and criticized, but seldom exaggerated. Most recognize Wuest as a thorough student of the Bible, a forceful and fearless speaker, energetic evangelist, sympathetic shepherd of his flock, and zealous propagator of mission.⁵⁹ In today's language, he was a Spirit-endowed leader with real charisma. With Johann Bonekemper, he became God's chosen instrument for sparking a widespread spiritual awakening in many German villages in Russia, particularly in the Ukraine.⁶⁰ He contributed much to bringing the "Second Great Awakening" of the 19th century in Germany, Great Britain, and America to Russia's large German and Mennonite settlements.⁶¹ Wuest's revival was characterized by deeply moving conversions to Jesus Christ — crisis experiences of Methodist proportions, resulting in assurance of salvation accompanied by heart felt joy and peace. He preached pietistic sanctification: confession of sin, restitution, a separated life. The result was bold witnessing, public prayer, group Bible studies in

homes, and joyous participation in missions. His ministry stimulated a separatistic type of church with strong emphasis on separation from unbelievers in observance of the Lord's Supper.⁶²

Wuest was a Tuebingen theologian-pastor who associated with the *Hahnische Gemeinschaft* and *Die Evangelische Brudergemeinde*, a separatist group in Korntal, near Stuttgart, Wuerttemberg.⁶³ He served as an assistant to pastors⁶⁴ until early in 1844, when he came into contact with *Die Hahnische Gemeinschaft*, a pietistic, premillennial evangelistic movement in Wuerttemberg. It was in the *Gemeinschaft* Bible studies that Wuest came to the knowledge of Christ as personal Savior. In a Methodist meeting in Winnenden, with the assistance of missionary Mueller, he came to the joyous experience of assurance of salvation during the watchnight service of 1844-45. His description of the overwhelming event portrays him as a man capable of deep emotional experiences, characteristic also of his later ministry. He informs us that he was filled with unspeakable joy and an assurance full of glory which he wished he could have shared with the whole world; so overflowing was the blessing that all he could do was raise his hands and shout for joy, "Praise be to the Lord!"⁶⁵ Wuest thus represented a fusion of Tuebingen theological training and a warm, outgoing pietism, soon combined with zeal for mission — a rare blend of qualities.⁶⁶ He quickly became a recognized leader and teacher of the movement.

When he began preaching in nearby communities, over-crowding churches wherever he preached, he drew upon himself the wrath of his associates. After lengthy proceedings he was released by the official church and forbidden to preach in the districts. His following, however, was too strong to submit to such restriction, and Wuest continued as an independent evangelist in close association with the Korntal *Bruedergemeinde* supported by pastor Gottlieb Wilhelm Hoffman and the *Hahnische Gemeinschaft*.⁶⁷

Hoffman was considered the leader of the separatistic, pietistic movement. It was to him that the Wuerttemberg settlers of Russia looked for guidance.⁶⁸ When a request came from Russia for a pastor, Hoffman recommended Eduard Wuest. Thus in 1845 Wuest came to the German settlement

near Berdyansk, where three villages had formed separatist churches after the order of Korntal.⁶⁹

His fame soon spread beyond the local community, so that he began to respond to calls from as far away as St. Petersburg and the Crimea.⁷⁰ He also was attracted to the Mennonite people and repeatedly ministered in the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church, appearing often as the annual missions festival speaker.⁷¹

Throughout, he maintained friendly relationships with the Pietists, Moravian Brethren, and Methodists of Germany, and tried to reproduce in his own ministry their piety and evangelistic fervor.⁷²

Through his influence, annual missions festivals were conducted in his community, celebrations which drew hundreds of visitors. It was not unusual to see friends from St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other distant cities meet for fellowship at these festive occasions. He organized missions study groups and missions sewing circles, and distributed much missions literature.⁷³ In all of these activities the Mennonite Church of Gnadenfeld fully supported him. Such cooperation naturally extended Wuest's services into the many Mennonite villages in the colony.⁷⁴

During his visits to the Mennonite communities he always carried missions literature with him, to read and discuss at every opportunity. He was also a great gatherer of funds for foreign missions. These activities strengthened missions activities in Gnadenfeld and also reproduced them in many villages. Thus a greater vision was created, and a fire kindled that is still burning today.⁷⁵

Indeed, Eduard Wuest was God's instrument to bring revival, restoration and ministry enthusiasm to the Mennonite churches. It is difficult to imagine the origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church without his ministry, although the brethren possibly did not receive the concept of a believer's church from him.⁷⁶ Nor can we imagine the growth of missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church without this man.

As an added note, in retrospect Wuest was more effective in his work among the Mennonites than among his own people in Neu Hoffnung, where his influence was neither as strong nor as lasting.⁷⁷ The main reasons seem to be that, first, he never

broke through decisively to the concept of a believer's church: he remained a pedo-baptist and his church remained a "mixed multitude." Second, his ministry was too one-sided, as he later admitted. He failed to lead his church into full counsel of God and remained narrow in his teaching emphases. This evaluation should not detract from the man's greatness nor reduce his contribution to the beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church and its enthusiasm for missions.

Missions literature and visits by missionaries

In evaluating the growth of missionary vision among the Mennonites in Russia, we must keep in mind that the connections between the Mennonites of Russia and of Germany, especially Prussia, were kept alive. As people traveled back and forth, information circulated. The Mennonites of Russia were familiar with missions literature. They knew of William Carey and Adoniram Judson. The latter's baptism caused considerable discussion among searchers for the truth, and may even have been one of the motivations for introduction of immersion years later in the Mennonite Brethren Church.⁷⁸

We have already seen how Moravian Mission literature found its way into the Mennonite communities through the ministry of Tobias Voth. Other reading material soon followed. Thus, such German papers as *Die Biene auf dem Missionsfelde*, *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin*, *Hermannsburger Missionsblatt*, and *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* were known in Russia. They served to broaden the horizon of the people and to bring home the responsibility for world evangelism.⁷⁹

Foreign missionaries were also used to stimulate missions interest. A missionary Moritz, mentioned in a letter from the 1830s, is said to have visited the church at Lichtenau.⁸⁰ A certain missionary Saltet from Tiflis, probably of the Basel Mission, was well acquainted with the Russian Mennonite communities. In a letter dated July 27, 1825, he recommends to the Mennonites a missionary to the Jews named Wolf.⁸¹ Wilhelm Schlatter, a Swiss missionary, also was well known to the Mennonites and visited them several times. There is no reason to believe that these are the only visits the churches experienced.⁸²

Contacts with the Baptists of Germany

The Mennonites of South Russia were not unfamiliar with the Baptists as a separate church movement. The Dutch Mennonites and the English Baptists have lived in friendly relationships for several centuries. There was a bond of commonness between them. However, this relationship affected the Mennonites of Prussia and Russia very little, for they paid little attention to the English Baptists. The whole matter changed when the Baptist movement was transplanted to Germany. Their impact was soon felt among Russian Mennonites, particularly in the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The Baptists of Germany made their contribution along several lines. Baptist missions literature was read as early as 1837.⁸³ The writings of the German missionary J.G. Oncken of Hamburg became available to the Mennonites of South Russia via their Prussian friends at an early date. Oncken himself exercised great influence over the Mennonite Brethren in the church's formative years and visited them several times.⁸⁴ August Liebig, a German Baptist missionary, provided invaluable services. Karl Benzien, a Baptist deacon, assisted the new Chortitza Mennonite Brethren Church in their business sessions and helped them develop a church polity.⁸⁵ In the total Mennonite Brethren Church the Baptists contributed substantially to the creation of a "conference" concept and polity.⁸⁶ Thus during their formative years, the Baptists aided the Mennonite Brethren in church organization, teaching, and counseling ministries.

Again, Baptist influence was felt strongly in the development of a sense of responsibility for the evangelization of the Russian population and motivating the Mennonites to look upon Russia as a mission field. Largely because of German Baptist missionaries, the Mennonite Brethren churches ventured out to evangelize Russian people and early in their history actively supported Russian evangelists.⁸⁷

The Baptists gave the Mennonite Brethren Church a song in the *Glaubensstimme*.⁸⁸ Nor was their Confession of Faith unknown to the Mennonite Brethren.⁸⁹

Because of such influences, a strong bond of cooperation existed for many years between the German Baptists and the

Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia. Most Mennonite Brethren missionaries from Russia later attended the Baptist seminary in Hamburg in preparation for their assignments in India. Others prepared there for the ministry.⁹⁰ Although the Mennonites of Russia did not directly contact the Baptists as early in the 19th century as they contacted others, the example and influence of the Baptists were of greater and more lasting significance.

This fraternal relationship carried over to America. Numerous doctrinal articles in early issues of the *Zionsbote*, for example, were written by Baptists and were read eagerly by the Mennonite Brethren constituency.⁹¹ Some years later the pioneer missionaries of the Mennonite Brethren trained in the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester.⁹²

However, such relationships did not result in official joint actions and functions. The Anabaptist heritage in the Mennonite Brethren was strong enough to prevent such fusion. The sense of the distinctiveness of the brotherhood and responsibility to "the faith once inherited" motivated the Mennonite Brethren to develop their own ministries, much to the benefit of the churches.

In summary, several things become clear.

First, God's ways are not our ways. His thoughts, his purposes are higher than ours. His longsuffering and grace are not so easily exhausted as ours. He knows the frailties and sluggishness of his people, yet does not cast them away. Instead, he works to renew his people and lead them into his world purpose. Under the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit various people, means and events combine to bring God's people into the orbit of his operations. God, indeed, is a God of grace and salvation.

Second, it would be presumptuous to claim that the Mennonites are uniquely God's people. However, throughout history there have been "remnants" that have listened to God's voice and sought to obey his commands as soon as it became clear that such commands were addressed to them. The author counts the Mennonite Brethren as one such "remnant."

Third, outside influences on the Mennonite Brethren during the formative years were considerable and varied. No

doubt they created some serious tensions. Mennonite Brethren, however, were not mere sponges which absorbed everything which came their way, or mere clay which permitted itself to be molded in shapes determined by external forces. They were more like a winnower (*Putzmuehle*) who sifts the grain from the chaff. A sober spirit of discernment is evident. They were not afraid of wholesome outer influences, as P.M. Friesen so beautifully presents it.⁹³ Like true Anabaptist-Mennonites, they refused to close their system to growth and modification. They believed in learning, enriching, modifying, adapting. They were not a fixed establishment.

The various outside influences created a modified, considerably enriched, new brand of Mennonitism, the Mennonite Brethren Church:⁹⁴ pietistic in spirit and in eschatology, Mennonite in basic doctrine and ethical precept, and later mildly baptistic in its church organization, with an emphasis upon autonomy of the local assembly. Nevertheless historic identity and continuity remained strong, with the exception of one church for a limited time.⁹⁵

In our days we are much occupied with 16th-century Anabaptist-Mennonitism. To do historical study is sound. A people that does not know where it comes from seldom knows where it is going. It is good to know our roots. However, in this pursuit we may easily forget that the heritage of the Mennonite Brethren has been greatly enriched since those years. The second half of the 19th century added important ingredients to traditional Mennonitism in Russia, and the past twenty-five to thirty years have considerably modified American Mennonitism, particularly in the United States, where American evangelicalism has added some emphases, if not elements, to our heritage. Most certainly the last quarter of the 20th century is not a duplicate of the second and third quarters of the 16th century! Whether we have been as wise and as cautious as our forebearers, only a future historian will be able to tell. Both progress and erosion are evident in our churches and institutions, though in general it would appear that we are much "richer" today than ever before. The call "Back to ..." therefore must be listened to cautiously, weighed prayerfully, and followed with discernment, for it could be a reversion and not likely a revival. To historical continuity and

identity we say "Yes!" To reversion to the 16th century, "No!" We must go on, ever enlarging and enriching life and ministry, thus bequeathing to our children more than we received.

Discussion questions for Chapter 1

- 1. Compare the different views of mission held by the early Anabaptists and later pietists. Note particularly the motivation and the goals of each. What impact did each of these views have on the missionary vision of the Mennonite Brethren churches?*
- 2. What relationship does missionary zeal have to the spiritual life of the church? How is it affected by specific theological beliefs such as the conviction that one must be born again in order to be saved, and that those who do not hear the gospel are eternally lost?*

2

MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA

Before 1860 the Mennonite colonies had few organized mission endeavors, though individual members and some leaders did carry on a witness. It must be remembered that the Russian court forbade all missionary activity among the Russian people. This prohibition, as has been stated, was a matter of religious concern rather than hostility. The Tsar, as legal head of the Russian Orthodox Church, was bound by oath to protect the faith of his people.

The Mennonites had entered Russia under these missionary restrictions. Whether such limitations caused them any concern is a matter of debate. To argue, as Gerhard Lohrenz does, that the Mennonites never promised not to evangelize the Russian people is to rationalize a case.¹ The Russian Manifesto of 1763 was clear: it forbade all proselytizing among the Russian people. To persuade a Russian individual to leave his Orthodox Church constituted a criminal offence with severe consequences for both the Russian member and the evangelist. It is difficult to imagine that the Mennonites were not even aware of such restrictions.² Such ignorance seems inconceivable, for Mennonite leaders were intelligent people. It seems more probable that it mattered little to them that such restrictions existed. Evangelism and missions were initially not a serious concern of the Mennonites because of their generally low spiritual condition; they were interested in land and the unprecedented opportunity for economic expansion under uninhibited circumstances.

Nevertheless, the restrictions were there — for the Mennonites and, for that matter, for all immigrants to Russia. We should perhaps not judge the colonies too harshly for not having been a missionary people.

Evangelism in the Mennonite colonies

When the brethren seceded on January 6, 1860, and organized a separate church on May 30 of that year, evangelism and mission had already become a part of their life as was shown in the preceding chapter. It was now time for the brethren to nurture the interest and to channel their resources into the best possible avenues.

The members were active in their home communities, as the rapid expansion of Mennonite Brethren churches in the colonies testifies. The churches supported numerous traveling ministers, and lay evangelism among Mennonites was also fostered. Elder Abram Unger and Johann Wieler baptized twenty colonists of Old-Danzig in 1864, and in 1871-72 Johann Wieler labored among the settlers of Rohrbach, a village where pietism was very strong.³ It is estimated that by 1914 about 20 to 25 percent of the Mennonite constituency in Russia was affiliated with or at least related to Mennonite Brethren churches.⁴ Today the Mennonite Brethren churches in North America constitute the third largest Mennonite denomination in the U.S. and Canada, and have the largest foreign constituency in the mission field.⁵

Mission to the Russian people

As the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia grew, evangelism was directed toward three targets: the Russian people, the Telegu people of India, and the primitive tribespeople of northern Asia, Siberia.

Evangelism among the Russian people began in the early 1860s. The new movement expressed itself vigorously, the members being zealous to share their Christian experience with the many Russian workers in the Mennonite villages. These undertakings were not unnoticed—in 1862 several leaders were called before the Russian court on charges of having attempted the conversion of Russian laborers. In 1862 a young Russian servant, Matvey Serbulenko, was baptized. In 1864 Andrey Posasenko was baptized. On June 11, 1869, Efim Cimbal, who became a notable Russian Baptist leader, was baptized by Abram Unger, elder of the Mennonite Brethren Church at Einlage.⁶

Johann Wieler became the first of the Russian Mennonite Brethren to aggressively evangelize the Russian people. Wieler, a high school teacher who spoke the Russian language well, ministered to the Russian Baptist churches for almost thirty years, traveling widely. He died in 1889 in Rumania as pastor of a Baptist church, having escaped from Russia to avoid arrest, imprisonment or banishment.⁷

In 1882 the brethren formed a committee to gather funds for the support of Russian evangelists.⁸ Eventually they fully supported nine Russian evangelists and several of their own men. The work encountered strong opposition;⁹ nevertheless the hand of the Lord was upon it and it prospered.

In 1905 prospects for evangelism brightened when the Russian government promised freedom of religion and religious propaganda.¹⁰ Though this experience of freedom was shortlived, it intensified motivation and enlarged the program of evangelism among the Russians. In 1910 the Mennonite Brethren Church had a vital part in opening the United Theological Seminary in St. Petersburg for the training of Russian pastors and evangelists. One of its illustrious men, Adolf Reimer, became a leading teacher in the school.¹¹

Reimer was well known for his ministry to the Russian churches from 1906 to 1910, and for his work as a traveling evangelist and Bible teacher. He conducted a Bible course in the Mennonite colonies to awaken interest in missions and prepare men for ministry to the Russian people. He died in Alexandertal in 1921, having contracted typhoid fever while laboring in the Kiev area.¹²

The years of World War I were depressing for the Mennonites of South Russia. The colonists were predominantly German in culture; for this reason they were suspect, and their allegiance to Russia was seriously questioned. From time to time it was rumored that they might be banished to Siberia. The settlers became restless, especially toward the end of hostilities and just before the Russian Revolution in March, 1917. Under such circumstances the mission spirit became subdued.¹³

The situation changed radically with the coming of the Revolution. The subsequent proclamation of religious freedom was accepted by the brethren as a God-given opportunity for

evangelism. Extensive missions operations were begun. Though these operations were of a private nature, spearheaded and directed by energetic individuals, they found official church approval and good support among Mennonite Brethren churches.¹⁴

Heinrich J. Enns was one who began his ministry after the 1917 Revolution. A close co-laborer of Adolf Reimer, he worked as evangelist, Bible teacher and pastor-at-large to the Baptist churches in South Russia, which now numbered in the hundreds. Because of his constant travels he attracted the suspicion of the commissars. As a result, he and his family were disenfranchised, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment, and later was banished from the Ukraine. He escaped, however, and ministered for several years in the Caucasus. He returned secretly to get his family, but the news reached the commissars; all hospitality was forbidden him and he was literally driven out of the home. When he died in desperate circumstances on his flight, a burial plot was denied him by the communist authorities. Finally the village of Alexandertal secured a permit, and his body was buried there.¹⁵

Heinrich P. Sukkau was another who labored for a number of years after the Revolution among the Russian churches in and about Samara, in the Ural area. Though he was a farmer with very little academic education, the Lord qualified him in a most remarkable manner. Eventually he became the overseer of some ninety Russian churches in that area. He traveled continuously; his path among the Russian people soon became a trail of revivals. It is reported that many of his services lasted through the night, so eager were his listeners to hear him. He was known as a man with unusual power in prayer and indeed was a faith missionary with no committee or church to support him. His faithful ministry was abruptly terminated when he was banished to the slave labor camps of Siberia.¹⁶

A unique type of ministry was being carried on among the many Russian working men and women in the Mennonite villages. It was not unusual to turn the Sunday evening service in Mennonite Brethren churches into an evangelistic service in the Russian language and invite Russian workers. Many responded in faith at these services.¹⁷

A *tent mission* was a short-lived effort to reach certain Rus-

sian villages.¹⁸ The work began in Moscow as an outreach of the Mennonite medical corps. It was organized and directed by Jacob Dyck, a German-trained engineer in the service of the Russian government in Moscow. When in March of 1917 the Tsarist government was overthrown and religious freedom was proclaimed, Dyck immediately organized a number of Christian volunteers, mostly from the Mennonite medical corps, rented halls throughout Moscow, and began widespread gospel campaigns. He also succeeded in obtaining some tents from the Red Cross. When the men were released from service at the end of the war with Germany, they organized themselves into five evangelistic groups. Equipped with tents, they made their way from Moscow south to their homes in the Ukraine. As they moved from village to village, they conducted three-day campaigns. Many small groups of believers sprang up, and existing churches were strengthened. The men reached home in late fall.

In June, 1919, twenty-four missionaries—twelve men and twelve women—were dedicated in a special service in the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren Church for a new push in tent campaigns into the numerous villages in south and central Russia. Though greatly hampered by civil war and roaming bandits, the work pressed forward with vigor. During the summer, however, the captain of the tent movement, Jacob Dyck, and several of his co-laborers were massacred by bandits.

The shock was almost too much for the movement. However, the energetic Adolf Reimer took over leadership and gave the mission new impetus, until continuing harassment by bandits, ever-tightening legal restrictions, the eventual prohibition of religious work, and persecution of Christian workers ground the work to a complete halt in the early 1920s. The tent mission is concrete evidence that some Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren individuals felt strongly responsible to evangelize the Russian people.

During this same time, converts were being organized into churches, mainly Baptist groups, and that for two reasons. First, the Baptists had initiated a dynamic movement in cooperation with Mennonite Brethren workers and churches. Second, it was thought advisable, according to elder Gerhard Regehr, to distinguish the new Russian movement from the

traditional Mennonite churches.

The first Russian Baptist group was organized at Einlage under the leadership of the brethren. Another was formed in 1879 in the village of Novo-Sofievka, in the vicinity of the Mennonite Brethren church at Borvenko. In 1883 thirteen Russians were baptized and formed into a Baptist group. At the conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Rueckenau in 1882, nineteen Russian delegates were present, and a united Mission Committee as well as treasury were formed. When the "First Russian Conference of baptized Christians, or so-called Baptists" met in Novo-Vasilyevka in 1884, it was through the initiative of Johann Wieler and J.W. Kargel, the former becoming chairman of the new Russian independent movement for some years.¹⁹

Thus the close association of the Mennonite Brethren Church with the rise of the strong evangelical movement among the Russian population in the second half of the 19th century is well established and proves the strong missions interest of the Mennonite Brethren.

It should be stated here, however, that the Mennonite Brethren were not the only ones extending their ministry to the Russian population. The German pietist groups in South Russia and the German Baptists were also at work. It is impossible to determine the relative influence of the various groups, since the literature dealing with the evangelical movement among the Russians does not distinguish between contributing agencies.²⁰

This Russian evangelical movement totaled several million adherents at the time of the Russian Revolution.²¹ Since then it has furnished many witnesses to the gospel, many of whom were martyred for their faith. It has stood against all brutal attacks of communism and is still continuing its mission.²²

Mission to the tribespeople of Northern Asia

The Mennonite colonizers had expanded from the Ukraine beyond the Ural Mountains into the vast plains of the north and into the Siberian steppes. Beyond them, stretching to the Arctic Ocean, lay the almost impenetrable forests of the northern zone. In these forests and along the rivers lived mainly

two types of people: those who for criminal or political charges had been banished from civilization, and primitive tribes-people, the aborigines of the area. The aborigines were mostly shamanistic in religion and worshipped crude idols and all kinds of evil spirits. They survived by hunting, fishing and gathering food in the forests, though some cultivated some plots of land. All were untouched by the gospel.

Initial contacts were made by a Prussian-born German pietist, Karl Benzin (not to be identified with the deacon Benzin who labored in Chortitza).²³ He had been banished during World War 1 from the German colonies in Russia into northern Siberia. Deeply moved by the spiritual plight of the Yakuts, or Ostjaken, a primitive tribe of people, he launched a mission. He appealed to the Mennonite Brethren in Siberia for workers. Mr. and Mrs. Johann Peters, Mr. and Mrs. Johann Kehler, and Helena Peters volunteered.

In May, 1918, the missionaries set out by boat down the rivers into the wilds where the Yakuts were scattered over a vast area. Later, contacts were also made with the Tungus, the Samojeden and the Syrjanen.

Revolutionary conditions in Russia, the distance from civilization, and lack of transportation made communication with the home churches impossible. The missionaries, therefore, depended on the resources of the Siberian forests and rivers. Their lifestyle demanded tremendous sacrifice and hard work. On top of that, they faced the suspicions and moral debauchery of the people.

The missionaries pressed forward, undaunted by incredibly difficult conditions and periods of great loneliness. They engaged in Bible teaching, walking hundreds of miles through the dense forests and traveling along treacherous rivers to find the scattered people. In 1924 they were joined by several more couples, who eventually helped establish six mission centers. Soon, banished ministers from the south and other believers joined them.

The few reports available tell of conversions, baptisms, and the organization of small congregations. Most of the work was done in the Russian language through interpreters, except that Johann Peters learned the Tungus language and prepared some literature in that language. The latest field report, dated

1934, tells of the existence of indigenous congregations of up to several hundred believers, with native evangelists preaching to their own people. Here the curtain falls upon one of the truly heroic experiences in Mennonite Brethren missions history. Johann Peters was apprehended in 1936 and disappeared from history. His wife died in Siberia in her home village in 1978. We thank God for those who could not and would not be silent among a spiritually destitute people.

Mission to the Telugus of India

The missionary service among the Russians, important as it was, did not distract the brethren from the need existing in regions beyond their own country. Their contributions continued to flow to various German mission societies, though a larger proportion began to be sent to the Baptists.²⁴ As missionary interest and donations increased, the brethren began to desire that God would raise up someone from among them to go to the mission field.²⁵

The first missionary volunteer. After years of waiting and prayer, the Abram Friesens volunteered for service in India. Friesen was born in 1859 in Niederchortitza and went to elementary school in Einlage. He was the son of wealthy parents; his father owned large mills and a factory for farm implements. Soon this bright young man developed into a prosperous businessman, becoming his father's right-hand man.²⁶ Then he heard the call of God to missionary service. With his father's blessing, he and his young wife went to Hamburg, Germany, where he spent four happy years in the Hamburg Baptist Seminary. Mrs. Friesen received special training for women's work.²⁷

The Friesens returned to South Russia in 1889 and left that same year for India. They arrived in Madras on November 16, and soon after went on to Secunderabad for language study.²⁸ Their destination: Nalgonda.

The choice of the field. The membership of the Mennonite Brethren Church at this time was not large, about 1,800 members.²⁹ Thus a large project could not be considered. The brethren were also unfamiliar with the various mission fields and were unable to make a choice without some outside help. Perhaps the greatest difficulty, however, was the Russian Or-

thodox Church monopoly on the rights for mission activities. Thus the brethren were unable to secure a charter from the Russian government authorizing an independent missions enterprise.³⁰ The alternative was to affiliate with an older, established missions organization outside the borders of Russia. Their choice was the American Baptist Missionary Union of Boston, Massachusetts.

This choice was made at the suggestion of Abram Friesen, still in Hamburg, whose attention had been drawn to the Telugus of southern India through the reading of challenging reports about Nalgonda. When he presented this field to the church, they readily approved. On May 6, 1889, the board of the American Baptist Mission Union accepted the Friesens' application and appointed them to service in India. Later the Nalgonda field was assigned to them.³¹

Though Friesen was appointed as a regular missionary of the mission, he was not satisfied; he believed that the home churches must share a greater responsibility for their own missionaries and shoulder the financial burdens. With this in mind he returned to Russia from Germany. In August he was able to report to the mission, "Our Mennonite Brethren have decided to support me and my wife at our work. They will also defray the traveling expenses."³² About \$2,000 a year was sent by Mennonite Brethren for the Friesens' work, as well as passage, outfit, and salary of \$1,500 for Abram Huebert, a second missionary. At a Boston meeting Friesen arranged for the Union to take over the whole Nalgonda district for the Mennonite Brethren in association with the Union.³³

A plan of cooperation between the American Baptist Mission Union and the Mennonite Brethren of Russia was approved by the Union's board on September 26, 1904 (See Appendix B.1, p. xxx). This association lasted for a decade, after which the brethren were cut off by war conditions and lost the work they had established.

Nalgonda. The Nalgonda field, in the southeastern part of the Muslim Kingdom of Hyderabad (now Andhra Pradesh) covers an area of about 6,000 square miles, with a population estimated at 700,000 living in 2,000 villages (1975 figures). The district is known for its poverty and recurring drought. The Telugus who inhabit this district hold to the ancient In-

dian religions.³⁴

Work in Nalgonda had begun when in 1885 a national helper named Veraswamy was sent into the southeast section of Secunderabad. The field opened up most wonderfully, so that missionary W. W. Campbell soon asked the government for land for mission premises.³⁵ The response in the new field was such that R. Maplesden, who succeeded Campbell, reported in 1889: "The importance of developing and carrying on the work in this Nalgonda field can scarcely be overestimated. There are indications that Nalgonda is the door through which the divine blessing is to enter into the Deccan."³⁶ In that year Maplesden reported the baptism of 160 people.³⁷

In 1892 Abram Friesen was able to report:

Our work in the field has been greatly blessed. One hundred and seventy-eight new converts, who for some time had been instructed by our preachers, were received into the church by baptism, and more than one hundred candidates are under our care, and are waiting for the ordinances. The rapidly growing work compelled us to open eight new outstations in centers of the field, and to increase the number of our native helpers from five to fifteen, besides three Christian women who support Mrs. Friesen in her work.³⁸

A problem arose at the organization of a church: the Mala Christians refused to fellowship with the Madigas, who were of a different caste, and withdrew. After some instruction, harmony was restored.³⁹

From the beginning, two sound principles were inculcated: self-support, and the dependence of the pastor upon the local church instead of upon the missionary. Friesen wrote: "The three newly established churches give about half towards the support of their respective pastors, the remainder being given as a grant to the churches. The pastor is entirely dependent upon the churches."⁴⁰

Though the work of education proceeded more slowly — teaching children in the villages was hindered by local Muslim officials — a boarding school was flourishing in Nalgonda by 1896. A medical work grew out of the great need in the field. The missionaries repeatedly lamented their limited knowledge of medicine and their inadequate facilities. But by 1896 funds had been provided for a dispensary, a woman doctor had

arrived, and the foundation for a hospital had been laid.⁴¹

When the Friesens left Nalgonda in the spring of 1897 to return to Russia for a rest, they were able to give this report:

An organized church of seven hundred members supporting its own pastor; a women's mission society to care for the poor women; a young people's Christian organization; several Bible women; a Sunday School and a missionary training school; twenty out-stations supplied with native teachers and evangelists.⁴²

The Friesens returned, other missionaries joined them; and by 1900 the Nalgonda field was divided into three centers: Nalgonda, with Abram Friesens in charge; Suriapet, with the Abram Hueberts in charge; Bhonigir, with the Heinrich Unruhs in charge.

By 1914 six couples and three single women had served in the Nalgonda field. Of these, only two couples, the Franz Wienses and the Johann A. Penners, were still in India. The others were retired, ill, or on furlough. Heinrich Unruh had died in India and Anna Epp had transferred to the American Mennonite Brethren Mission, which by then was operating nearby.⁴³

Transfer of the mission to the American Baptist Missionary Union. The work was interrupted by war. As early as September, 1914, H.J. Braun, treasurer for the Mennonite Brethren in Russia, reported that the drafts he had sent to India had not been cashed and that he had no further way of sending money to the missionaries. The American Baptist Missionary Union, assured that the Mennonite Brethren had sufficient funds in their treasury to repay a temporary loan, agreed to provide money so that the mission work could be carried on.⁴⁴

The Mennonite Brethren, however, never were able to repay the Union or resume the work. The Russian Revolution destroyed not only their homes and property, but also their hope to be reunited with their missionaries. Through the years the once flourishing work of the Mennonite Brethren of Russia became part of the American Baptist Mission work.

Discussion questions for Chapter 2

1. *In view of growing political oppression in many countries*

of the world on the one hand, and of political anarchy and terrorism in others on the other hand, what lessons can we learn from the earlier Mennonite Brethren experiences in Russia about carrying on the life and the mission of the church in such situations? What should the church's response be to its mandate to witness to those around it? Are there times when the church is justified in silencing its public witness when the alternative threatens to be the annihilation or deportation of the church?

2. How should a church or conference proceed in seeking to discern the will of God about selecting a new field for mission work, and for selecting people to send to these fields?

3

FOUNDATIONS OF MISSIONS: THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

The early Mennonite Brethren churches of North America are a transplant of the more conservative element of the Mennonite Brethren churches of Russia. The first groups migrated to the United States in the 1870s and 1880s.¹ They came together with other Mennonite groups and settled, with a few exceptions, more as families than according to church affiliation. Churches were established wherever substantial settlements of Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren grew up: Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. In 1879 the Mennonite Brethren organized themselves into a conference at Henderson, Nebraska.² Somewhat later they expanded into Oklahoma and California, with Oregon, Washington, Texas and Michigan receiving smaller groups.³ Around the turn of the century migrations to Canada began, with Mennonite Brethren settling mainly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.⁴

It must be mentioned that the first Mennonite Brethren churches of Manitoba were not transplants. Evangelism efforts by Mennonite Brethren ministers from the United States, specifically elders Heinrich Voth of Minnesota and David Dyck of Kansas, brought the gospel to the colonists there.⁵ As a result several Mennonite Brethren churches had been organized before the turn of the century. Thus as early as 1898 the Mennonite Brethren Conference convened in Winkler, Manitoba.⁶

The second large segment of Mennonite Brethren came from Russia in the 1920s, settling mainly in Canada. They spread out from Ontario to British Columbia. Large and prosperous churches have grown up in Ontario and the western four provinces, with substantial constellations of churches forming in Winnipeg and Vancouver.⁷

In 1960 the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren churches of the United States and Canada merged with the Mennonite Brethren churches.⁸ The cultural, religious and theological backgrounds of the two church groups were so similar that the merger proceeded smoothly.⁹

For functional purposes the Mennonite Brethren churches of North America are organized into a General Conference; United States and Canadian conferences; and eleven district (U.S.) and provincial (Canada) conferences. In Canada the provincial conferences follow the provincial borderlines: Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia. In the United States the churches of several states unite to form one district conference: Central District — Illinois, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana; Southern District — Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Colorado; Pacific District — Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona; Latin America Mennonite Brethren Conference — (South) Texas; North Carolina Conference.¹⁰

The total North American Mennonite Brethren fellowship is bound together by a *common faith* through a Confession of Faith; *common purpose*, mainly missions and services; *common order*, the Constitution; *common institution*, the seminary.¹¹

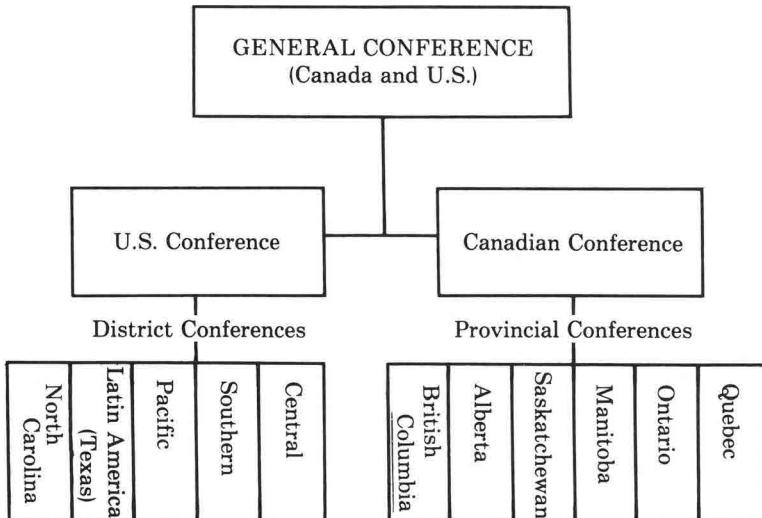
No major doctrinal disruptions or defections of churches have thus far occurred, and the movement has remained fairly stable. Its largest single project has always been the foreign missions enterprise.

The Board of Missions and Services operates under the jurisdiction of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America. It is the only official organ of missions and services of the fellowship in its overseas outreach. Governed by a constitution, the board consists of fifteen representative members elected by the General Conference for a six-year term, with one member-at-large serving for three years. According to the constitution, the members may succeed themselves once. It is provided that an equal number of the board members come from the United States and Canada, the member at large being elected from either area.¹² The Board discharges its responsibilities through a

secretariat with offices in Hillsboro, Kansas, and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

We turn now to the theological and philosophical underpinnings of missions, as understood by Mennonite Brethren.

Organizational Chart
of
The Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America



MENNONITE BRETHREN THEOLOGY OF MISSIONS

It must be said immediately that the Mennonite Brethren have not published any formal denominational statements which could be labeled "a theology of missions." The remarkable fact is that missions did not grow out of a formalized theology. Missions was not compartmentalized, it was not a "department of missions" in Mennonite Brethren thinking. The earliest statements of the Confession of Faith (1873, 1876, 1902) do not refer to missions in any particular way: only one sentence in the section on the "Church of God" alludes to missions by stating that a characteristic of the church is "the diligent searching of the Scriptures and the preaching of the pure gospel in all the world."¹³

The summary that follows, therefore, is the author's inter-

pretation of and deductions from articles in the *Zionsbote* (which served as the conference's German-language periodical for many years), reports to conferences, official documents of the Board of Missions and Services, gleanings from sermons and sermon outlines, and personal interviews with such leading brethren as N.N. Hiebert, H.W. Lohrenz, P.R. Lange, H.H. Flaming, H.S. Voth, J.J. Wiebe, P.C. Hiebert, William Bestvater, A.H. Unruh, John G. Wiens, missionaries J.H. Pankratz, J.H. Voth, F.J. Wiens, and others. Of special help was a personal visit with Elder Gerhard Regehr, for many years a member of the mission board in Russia and one of the founders of Mennonite Brethren missions. Of special importance in determining the biblical basis of Mennonite Brethren missions are the recorded sermons of Elder David Duerksen and comments by elders Abram Schellenberg and Heinrich Voth, the first two chairmen of the Board; the writings of N.N. Hiebert; ordinations and farewell services for missionaries as reported in the *Zionsbote*; missions messages preached at the *Hauptversammlungen* (regional gatherings); and two series of studies delivered by H.W. Lohrenz, missions secretary, in Hepburn, Saskatchewan in 1942, dealing with the foundations and nature of foreign missions according to the Bible.

Missions as a way of life

Rather than a stated theology, Mennonite Brethren missions was an attitude, a way of life, a product of the general biblicism of the brotherhood. Even a cursory study of Mennonite Brethren preaching and practice makes it obvious that far from being a "department," missions was a central motivation of prime importance.

Missions consciousness grew out of four basic factors: (1) the Anabaptist Mennonite heritage, as discussed earlier; (2) the strong missionary impact of pastor Eduard Wuest; (3) more important than either of these, the impact of the *total Bible message*, which awakened in the churches a serious desire to shape personal and church life according to patterns of Scripture; (4) above all, the imprint of the life and words of Jesus Christ, their living Lord, and the example of the Apostolic Church as portrayed in Acts and the epistles. The New Testament breathes evangelism and missions, and the

believers longed to live with the same spirit.

Several texts stand out in early missions preaching. Foremost was that cornerstone of Anabaptist theology, the Great Commission. That this text was central to Anabaptist thinking has already been stated. Mennonite Brethren interpreted the command to disciple all nations to be an abiding and compelling command to go and disciple, to go and preach the gospel. The Christian has no choice; he either obeys and remains involved in God's program of world evangelism, or he disobeys and remains outside the will and purpose of God.

Other important texts were Matthew 9:35-38, with its emphasis on compassion; and John 6:1-13, with its emphasis on spiritually feeding all people.

An illustration of Mennonite Brethren missions preaching is a message on Acts 1:8 outlined in the *Zionsbote* as follows:

Missions rests

- in the outpoured and bestowed love of God,
- in the finished work of Christ for all mankind,
- in the command of Christ, which expresses the *Lebensaufgabe*,
(emanation of his being)
- in the supreme responsibility of a Christian.

Missions is conditioned

- by the power of the Holy Spirit,
- by the hope of eternity and eternal life,
- by the assurance of being a child of God,
- by a burning love, for the brethren and the neighbors.

Missions expresses itself in word and deed:

- only what we have experienced can we testify to,
- only love can inspire us to be faithful in witnessing,
- only a person that has found forgiveness of sins can testify thereof.

On a foundation of the Anabaptist adherence to Scripture, and especially on the words and life of Christ and the Apostles, then, was the structure of Mennonite Brethren missions built. Obedience to the Word of God was no mere lip service: it dominated the thinking and shaped the very lives of the church.

An example of the outworking of this commitment, with its components of preaching, prayer, and wholehearted obedience to the Word, is found in the story of the search for the

first missionary to be sent out from the Mennonite Brethren Conference of North America. The field was to be India. The choice of the Board had fallen upon N.N. Hiebert of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Elder Voth of Mountain Lake, Brother Hiebert, and his parents agreed that while the demands of a mission in India were great and the responsibilities heavy, they had no right to say "no." Elder Voth, in order to gain assurance in this weighty matter, spent all night in an open field in prayer. In the morning as he entered his home he greeted Mrs. Voth with the words: "Mother, I believe the Lord is giving us a missionary in N.N. Hiebert."¹⁴

He called the church together for a day of prayer and fasting on May 31, 1898. After a lengthy prayer session, he preached an impressive message on Matthew 9:35-39, as recorded in the *Zionsbote*. He emphasized six points:

1. The compassion of Jesus in the midst of a multitude in need and misery
2. The distressed condition of the impoverished sheep — given up
3. The scattered condition of the sheep — danger of death
4. The plenteous harvest
5. The insufficient harvesters
6. The significance of prayer

Later he preached a second sermon, this time on John 15:16. The solid foundation of missions was this, that Elder Voth knew himself and his denomination to be ordained of God to "bear fruit."

The congregation committed itself to stand by the decision of the Board; and in July, N.N. Hiebert reported that he could not refuse the call and was placing himself at the disposal of the Lord and the brotherhood, in spite of some health problems and a limited education.¹⁵ He visited a number of churches before the official confirmation of his call at the annual conference later that year.

That missions was not a matter of legalistic obedience but of deep personal commitment is clear from the lives of the men in leadership. A sufficient number of the writings, articles and sermon outlines of N.N. Hiebert are available to know that he was motivated, not by cold command, but by deep compassion for the world in misery; the need and lostness of humanity

pressed upon him heavily. This mixture of compassion and sense of personal responsibility, together with faith in the greatness of the gospel, enabled him first of all to volunteer as the first Mennonite Brethren missionary, and later to bear the burden of the secretariat for 34 years (1902-1936).

No less passionate was his successor, H.W. Lohrenz, executive secretary for nine years (1936-1945). Though of entirely different temperament, he too was deeply concerned with the spiritual needs of humanity. Uppermost in his motivation, however, was his passion for the glory of Christ in the expansion of the church. His messages at General Conference gatherings and missionary conferences were overpowering in logic and in consuming zeal for the glory of Christ on earth.

The long-felt sentiment and conviction of the brotherhood concerning missions was formulated by A.E. Janzen and J.B. Toews, secretaries in the mission office, and printed in various Board handbooks. The following statement comes from the Handbook.

The missionary responsibility, as conceived by the Mennonite Brethren Church, is *stated* in the Great Commission of our risen Lord. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8. It is *exemplified* in the Book of Acts, which gives the record of the first witnesses going forth in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is *expounded* in the New Testament epistles, as the early apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to lay down the fundamental principles of all mission activities. Passages bearing out these principles are: Rom. 1:14-17; Rom. 10:11-17; 1 Cor. 1:24; 1 Cor. 2:1-10; 1 Cor. 3:5-15; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 9:14-19; 1 Cor. 2:14-16; 2 Cor. 4:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 3:1-12.

Accepting the Biblical teaching as a basis and guide, it shall ever be the endeavor of all our missionary activities:

1. To present the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone in the area of a mission field.
2. To baptize those who accept Jesus Christ by faith.
3. To organize and establish such believers in local churches for nurture, mutual edification, fellowship, instruction and service.
4. To unite the local churches of a field into an organized conference and national convention which is the church that continues the proclamation of the Gospel, directs and regulates its own church affairs and meets its own financial requirements.

These handbooks were approved at conference sessions and thereby became official expressions of the brotherhood.

Mennonite Brethren have sincerely sought to make evangelism and missions a vital dimension in their life and work. In general a wholesome attitude has prevailed in the churches in relation to these activities. In the movement as a whole, evangelism and missions became the focus and a major concern. Missions more than anything else has bound the churches together in a common purpose, given them a unique quality and kept them from stalemating in their life and work. In the sessions of the General Conference early in history, missions became a dominant note and occupied a good portion of the time. For years the reports were presented in a semi-festive manner, with furloughing missionaries and candidates seated on the platform as honorable guests and participants in the reporting. This was a highlight, a hallowed time in the sessions. In recent decades, though, the involvement of the Board of Reference and Counsel (which, among other things, deliberates matter concerning the faith and life of the churches) has become more dominant in conference sessions.

Not always, of course, have all churches lived up to the highest ideals and their fullest missions potential. However, evangelism and missions have never receded very far from a front-line position. When they have, it has usually been because the responsible Board failed to provide aggressive leadership and motivating challenges. In general the attitude has been positive, and churches have sacrificed and labored to proclaim the gospel at home and abroad.

An attempt at a theology of Mennonite Brethren missions

It has been stated that the Mennonite Brethren do not have any *formal* denominational theology of missions. That does not mean, however, that there is no implied theology which gives direction to Mennonite Brethren missions. The following five premises are the author's interpretation of the theological foundation stones on which Mennonite Brethren missions is built.

1. Missions is possible because God is who he is.

"In the beginning God" — so opens the greatest missionary book in the world. Ultimately all of missions flows from God, because God is an outgoing God. He is the God of love and light. Significantly, R.E. Speer writes: "It is in the very being and character of God that the deepest ground of the missionary enterprise is to be found. We cannot think of God except in terms which necessitate the missionary idea."¹⁶ After an analysis of the authority of missions he concludes: "Those grounds are in the very being and thought of God, in the character of Christianity, in the aim and purpose of the Christian church and in the nature of humanity, its unity, and its need."¹⁷ With these statements Mennonite Brethren would wholeheartedly agree.

The gospel rests in the person and purpose of God as manifested in the Trinity. Salvation begins with God, in that he loves the world and cares for mankind. His love is determined, not by the object of love, but by the source from which it springs — his very being, which is love, mercy and grace. He procured salvation at the infinite cost of his Son. W.O. Carver says, "No thought of God is true to His revelation of Himself that does not rest on the fact that He 'so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son'."¹⁸ God convicts people of sinfulness and the need of salvation through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. He provides spiritual nurture and fellowship in the church that believers might mature, serve, and glorify him.

2. Missions is necessary because man is who he is

Man is a peculiar, royal being in the midst of the created order: a being of reason, of moral and social consciousness and responsibilities, and of almost infinite potential. He is at home in this world and yet not at home, for eternity lives in his heart. Though he builds kingdoms in this world, no kingdom exhausts his aspirations and anticipations. His strivings have no limit and no end until, exhausted, he sinks into dust and ashes. Death is his awful, haunting and unconquerable enemy.

Who is man? Or in the words of the psalmist, "Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him!" (Ps. 144:3).

Biblical answers point to complexity and contradiction.

Man is a unique creation of God, having been created in the image of God and according to the special counsel of God.

Man is a peculiar creation of God, having been created for very specific purposes of God.

Man became by his own choice a sinful being, guilty and defiled, estranged from God and enslaved by sin, and consequently living in lostness and under the wrath of God. Yet man is incurably religious.

Man has attempted to develop his own way of escape and work out his own salvation in religious systems and practices, philosophical constructions, and elaborate civilizations.

Man is thus the highest and noblest of all creation, and at the same time the most miserable of all creatures. He is a bundle of needs and frustrations, hopes and fears, yearnings for reality and for eternity, achievements and defeats, hopefulness and helplessness. He is enslaved to sin and blinded to spiritual reality — yet not totally void of an awareness of God, purpose, and destiny.

Man is a being in *Widerspruch* (potential for re-creation). He is capable of being saved, set free, made whole — to live as true man for the purpose and glory of God, to see God and dwell with him.

The potential greatness and existential wretchedness, the unfulfilled but possible glory and divine calling and the actual lostness of man combine to challenge the church to missions. Because man can be redeemed from his eternal predicament only by the salvation of God in Christ Jesus, missions is a rescue and restoration operation of the gravest and most comprehensive nature and on a world scale.

3. Missions is urgent because Jesus Christ is who he is.

Jesus Christ is the true Son of man, king and lord, co-eternal and equal with God the Father, the Lamb of God, friend of sinners, and savior of the world. He is absolutely alone and unique in history; he has neither peer nor substitute. In saviorhood he is unique, sole, sufficient, and irreplaceable. Christianity cannot be placed alongside other religions, but confronts them all and excludes them as conveyors of salvation. For salvation is found in no other than in the name of

Jesus, no other way leads to the Father. He is the way, the truth, the life, the light, the bread of life, the resurrection and the life, the door, the good shepherd, the lamb of God. He is the lord of glory, the prince of life who "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

Samuel M. Zwemer writes:

Apart from God in Christ there can be no missionary enterprise. In Jesus Christ the work of missions finds its basis, its aim, its method, its message, its motive, and its goal. The evangelization of the nations is not a human but a divine project — an eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus. The message of the New Testament to the heathen world was redemption from sin. The word of the Cross was the message of the apostles; the power of the Cross was their motive; and the glory of the resurrection was their hope.¹⁹

The Mennonite Brethren Church would agree with Zwemer's statement without the slightest hesitation; it sums up decades of missions preaching in North America.

4. Missions is unavoidable because the nature of the church demands it.

We are living in the age of the church, an age which, according to Ephesians 3:6 and 11, is something new and great. The church of Jesus Christ is to be gathered from among all nations, for God is not a God of favoritism or particularism. God loves the world; his Son became the propitiation for the sins of the world; the Holy Spirit is operating to convict the world; the disciples were sent into the world to preach the gospel. All the world must hear God's call. Thus the realization of the eternal purpose of God for our age becomes bound up with world evangelization.

This was the persuasion of Paul (Eph. 3, Rom. 9 and 10). It was also the persuasion of the Mennonite Brethren churches, the result being that today their mission endeavors circle the globe.

5. Missions is imperative because the command of Christ exacts it.

The command to disciple all nations is an impelling com-

mand. We fully agree with Robert E. Speer when he says that "the last command of Christ is not the deep and final ground of the church's missionary duty," yet that duty is stated in the Great Commission, and "it is of infinite consequence to have had it so stated by our Lord Himself."²⁰ The gospel *must* be proclaimed among all nations (Mk. 13:10).

The Great Commission of our Lord is an authoritative summary statement of the whole *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history) movement of the Old Testament. The first promise of salvation occurs in Genesis 3:15, given to Adam. From that time on, God has never left the world outside the sphere of his concern and operations. God called Abraham that in him all families of the earth might be blessed: he chose Israel to be a mediating nation between himself and the world. When Israel failed, he sent the prophets, and finally the Son. Christ's commission, therefore, is based on the salvation history of the Old Testament.

Another word of Christ is pertinent here: "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (Jn. 15:16). These words make it evident that missions as a spiritual fruit and moral urgency grow out of a life of vital, loving relationship with the living Lord — a life enlarged by the grace of God, controlled by the Holy Spirit, permeated by the Word of God, a life that practices the mind of Christ, that takes its responsibilities seriously and in obedience enters deeply into the purpose of God. Missions is not a legal matter, an imposition of extraneous obligation. It becomes this when the life-flow between branch and vine is obstructed; but a withering and barren branch is an abnormal branch which needs correction and restoration. A church that shares freely in the life of the Son of God bears fruit; it will be a missionary church.

These five statements sum up fairly well the theology of missions for Mennonite Brethren. We would go amiss, however, should we stop here. There is an undefined but pervasive spiritual substructure underlying all premises. It is the assumption that all effectiveness in the Christian life and ministry is bound up with the abiding presence and operation of the Holy Spirit and the bounteous sowing of the Word of God.

It is true that the Christo-centric consciousness of Mennonite Brethren teaching has kept the churches from a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Strange silence has too often prevailed. The Holy Spirit as a conscious presence in experience was little known and emphasized. However, this does not mean that Mennonite Brethren did not have a deep and sound, even dogmatic conviction concerning his presence. The conviction was more a biblical assumption than experiential consciousness; nevertheless, his presence was to them a dependable reality.

A similar attitude prevailed in relation to the Bible. It was taken for granted that the Bible is the Word of God written, and that this Word is living and dynamic. A full confidence that the Word would not return void but accomplish its God-ordained purpose has characterized the faith of the Mennonite Brethren. Thus they have demanded that their ministers and missionaries be people of the Word, able to preach the Word of God in simplicity and sincerity.

A word needs to be said concerning their attitude toward prayer. It cannot be said that the Mennonite Brethren ever proceeded systematically to mobilize the constituency for prayer. Such formal omission must not be interpreted as a symptom of disbelief in or neglect of prayer. In fact, the significance of prayer has always been emphasized, as is evident from articles in the *Zionsbote*. At the time of the appointments of the early missionaries to India, for example, the conference united in prayer, earnestly seeking that the will of the Lord might be done. It must not be imagined that these were exceptional instances. The author is witness to the fact that when serious difficulties arose in the second half of the 1940s in sending missionaries to the Congo (now Zaire), the chairman and secretary-treasurer called upon the churches for prayer. They themselves were locked away for several days in a hotel room for fasting and prayer. The barriers were removed, and the missionaries could proceed. It was nothing unusual for J.A. Harder, chairman of the Board for some years, to call the members to prayer when the Board was faced with difficult decisions, or when differences of opinion pulled members in opposing directions. The women of the conference also made

special prayer for missions at their missionary society meetings.

Early in the 1950s the Board developed a regular prayer calendar which was sent to the churches each month. These requests now appear in *Rejoice!* (an inter-Mennonite devotional booklet) and in the periodicals of the two national conferences. At present the office sends a weekly card to church leaders bringing noteworthy news items and requests for prayer before the congregations.

In summary, Mennonite Brethren theology of missions, like the foundation stones of a building, was so basic as to be invisible. It was taken for granted that all Christians should obey the Great Commission, and that churches should attempt to establish an outreach both at home and abroad, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and prayer.

MENNONITE BRETHREN PHILOSOPHY OF MISSIONS

Mission philosophy concerns itself with the major premises, priorities, thrusts, concepts, goals and governing principles of a missionary enterprise. The following section indicates how these have been defined and legislated in the unfolding missionary program of the Mennonite Brethren churches under the guidance of the General Conference.

Missionary priorities

The Mennonite Brethren churches of North America have never interpreted mission in such a narrow sense as to imply only spiritual salvation of the soul. They have always attempted to serve man in his total person — body, soul, spirit. When the Committee of Foreign Missions, for example, announced the appointment of the N.N. Hieberts as pioneer missionaries to India, it called at the same time for an agriculturalist who would accompany the Hieberts to assist the people in improvement of their material lot, and to help in the care of orphans and widows. Apparently no such couple came forward, though. The Committee did succeed in sending Elizabeth Neufeld, a teacher, and somewhat later Katharina Schellenberg, a nurse.²¹ Thus a full-orbed, well-balanced program of spiritual, economic, educational and physical ministry had been designed, if not fully carried out.

At the same time, the priority of evangelism was emphatically set out by N.N. Hiebert when he wrote from India to the home constituency:

1. Let us commit our selves to help India with all that is within us.
2. Let us commit ourselves to give annually what we can.
3. Let us build schools and institutions to assist the new generation to remake India.
4. Let us preach the gospel and pray.

What India needs is not money but the gospel, light and conversion. We go here not to feed, heal, but to preach the gospel. Brethren, pray for us to preach bountifully and the rest will also come.²²

Note that while the priority of gospel proclamation is emphasized, point 3 leaves room for ministries to other needs of man.

The whole mission program is ample evidence that while philanthropy, care for physical well-being and development of cultural values have never been consciously excluded from mission, neither were they permitted to gain the upper hand and thus absorb the major energy of the missionary.²³

An exception to the above policy prevailed during the beginning years of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia. It refrained from supporting educational and medical ministries in India. All finances were designated for supporting missionaries, national evangelists, and evangelism. This policy was corrected within a decade. The Abram Friesens developed a substantial medical ministry at Nalgonda. In 1904 Katherine Reimer was sent to India to supervise an extensive educational work. Soon a large hospital and good educational facilities were available to the people.²⁴

Evangelism as a mission priority has never been seriously challenged. Social welfare philosophies, the modern view of "service to the whole man" or "the whole church taking the whole gospel to the world" have been voiced from time to time in some local congregations. Thus far, however, they have not gained enough support to erode the priority of evangelism. The conference and most churches have maintained a fair balance between evangelism and social concerns in their official emphases and practical programs.²⁵

Priority affirmations: The 1943 affirmation

On two occasions the conference has affirmed in official declarations the mission priority of gospel proclamation. Both times the initiative came from the Board of Reference and Counsel of the General Conference and was approved by the entire brotherhood without hesitation or opposition.

The first official affirmation was presented to the General Conference in 1943 in session at Buhler, Kansas. It was evoked by peculiar circumstances, discussed presently. The statement is of sufficient significance to be quoted here, as given in the *General Conference Record* of 1943.

The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church has assumed the duty of bringing the gospel of salvation to the heathen, in accordance with the command of Christ as given in Matthew 28:19. Our missionaries have endeavored to make known the plan of God as manifested by God through Jesus Christ. All other phases of the missionary endeavor are subordinated to this main purpose and shall *only* serve to further the salvation of souls among the heathen. In accordance with the example set by our Lord and Master, our missionaries also have sought access to the hearts of men through channels that were most accessible to them, namely: The children through instruction in schools, the sick through the channels of medical care in hospitals and the others through contacts on the streets and in the homes. The committees of World Missions are convinced that the school and hospital work are important factors in the program of evangelization. It is also our sacred duty to keep our God-sent workers physically fit for their duties by creating wholesome conditions for them.

The cause for the affirmation is not mentioned, but it seems to lie in the creation of a new board at the 1936 conference, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations — a merger of the General Conference Relief Committee, established in 1924; the Committee of Non-resistance, created in 1919;²⁶ and a Canadian committee known as *Dienst am Evangelium* (service in the gospel).²⁷ Thus the new board combined relief ministries, education in non-resistance in the churches, and representation of conscientious objectors before the government. It assisted resettlement of Mennonites from Russia in Latin America, providing gospel ministries to them,

and represented the Mennonite Brethren constituency on the Mennonite Central Committee.²⁸ It would be an influential board in the brotherhood with its multi-pronged ministries at home and abroad. It could have become a rival to the Board of Foreign Missions, given the right combination of circumstances.

The year 1943 was also a time of world crisis. World War 2 had engulfed the globe and was creating unprecedented suffering. Clearly, the challenges of world relief and resettlement would strain the financial capacity of the Mennonite Brethren constituency. The diversion of funds to meet the pressing physical demands of humanity could endanger the mission program. Foreign missions had only recently come through the depression of the 1930s, and a word of caution seemed in order. The statement, therefore, was a note of warning to the churches to keep priorities balanced. Under no circumstances must the mission of gospel proclamation and church planting be neglected or superceded by other human needs.

A third sequence of events was the direct occasion (it could not have been the real cause) of this gentle reminder. At the previous conference in 1939 at Corn, Oklahoma, the conference had instructed the Board of Reference and Counsel and the Board of Foreign Missions to work out a basis upon which the General Conference would assume responsibilities for missions in Africa (the Belgian Congo/Zaire) and South China.²⁹ The findings of the joint body were reported to the churches in the *Zionsbote*. The constituency was invited to respond by letter. The result of this "dialogue" was a lengthy document known as the "Statement and Recommendations Concerning Foreign Mission Work" which spells out the thinking of the Board of Foreign Missions (See Appendix B.2, p.xxx). The 1943 statement is a policy response of the joint committee (the Board of Reference and Counsel and the Board of Foreign Missions) to the responses from the churches to the initial report in the *Zionsbote*.³⁰ It is thus the concluding statement of a dialogue between the boards and the churches.

The affirmation may be both positively and negatively evaluated. Positively, it seeks to keep the priorities in missions in biblical perspective. The committee makes sure that proclamation of the gospel will be the focus in missions, at least

theoretically. This is of fundamental significance and deserves to be recognized as a real credit to the brethren. A focus on proclamation is in keeping with Mennonite Brethren tradition and practice. It can be stated without hesitation that the conference, the churches, the board and missionaries have never deliberately deviated from such priorities. The fact, however, that such an affirmation was brought to the conference does betray fears that this might happen. The statement reveals alertness to potentially dangerous attitudes.

The emphasis on the word "only" in the third sentence, however, is troublesome. It appears to make service somewhat less than a Christian virtue and responsibility. Service is here seen as mainly a means to an end. While this may be logical from the missionary point of view, it seems to this writer to be biblically inadequate; it is difficult to harmonize such a position with the "servant life and mind" of our Lord, who took on the form of a servant and who came to serve and to give his life as ransom for many (Phil. 2:7; Mk. 10:45). His expression of compassion was not always and only a means to an end, but an outflow of life, an expression of his relationship to humanity. *Diakonia* is an essential element of Christianity, not merely a means to an end.

The 1966 affirmation and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations

The 1966 affirmation is a part of a lengthy document which guided the conference in the merger of two boards. Following is the statement of principles as recorded in the 1966 *General Conference Yearbook*.

Statement of Principles

1. The Mennonite Brethren Church believes that the proclamation of the Gospel is the primary task of the church. We reaffirm our understanding of the Great Commission as one of preaching Jesus Christ and teaching His disciples to do the things He has commanded. We are steadfast in the conviction that the Gospel is intended to meet the total needs of man — spiritual, social, material, or other basic human needs — but that every ministry follows from the responsibility to give priority to man's spiritual need, his alienation from God and his need for redemption through Jesus Christ.

2. The merger of the two boards with their respective re-

sponsibilities delegated to them by the brotherhood represents the conviction that proclamation and welfare ministries ought to be integrated, since our Lord and the early Church were concerned with such a total ministry. Such integration makes relief and welfare concerns, however necessary, subsidiary to the major task of proclamation, that is, they are no less spiritual in quality, but arise out of a basic mandate to proclaim the living Christ. Such integration would also call for equal standards in terms of spiritual commitment for all who participate in the program, whether they be long term or short term workers.

If the 1943 affirmation was designed to hold in check the newly created Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, the 1966 statement sought to maintain the priority of proclamation when this board merged with its counterpart, the Board of Missions. This priority was becoming more difficult to maintain, since ministries to the "whole man" were fanning out in every direction. Works of compassion, always part of the Anabaptist-Mennonite commitment, had started simply when the early brothers and sisters gave direct assistance to widows and orphans, the poor and emotionally distressed.³¹

American churches followed suit. The conference meeting in 1895 in Parker, S.D., passed a motion to gather an offering in each local congregation at the annual thanksgiving festival to assist persecuted Russian ministering members.³² It became the practice to receive substantial relief offerings on harvest-mission festivals and Thanksgiving Day for the oppressed and suffering people of the world, particularly those of the household of God. As early as 1901 more than \$3,600 was distributed in world relief.³³ Regular offerings for needy families in the immediate community were also received at the observance of the Lord's Supper. On the local level such offerings constituted the "deacon's fund" and were distributed at the discretion of the deacons. On conference level the funds were administered by the Board of Foreign Missions.

Following World War 1, committees were appointed by the several district conferences to gather funds and channel them through the newly created MCC relief agency to the suffering people of Europe, particularly the Mennonite colonists of Russia.³⁴ The district committees appointed to gather these funds were merged in 1924 into a General Conference Relief

Committee of seven members with P.C. Hiebert serving as chairman.³⁵

When, as indicated earlier, the Relief Committee merged with two other committees in 1936 to become the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, relief was only one of its functions. It was asked to supply assistance in spiritual, moral and social questions to the newly settled Mennonite colonies in Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.³⁶ Its duties also included the total question of conscientious objection to war, peace education in the churches, counseling and care for conscientious objectors in war time, and the ministry of social and civil reconciliation.³⁷ In 1948 this board brought to the General Conference a recommendation for a Christian Service program for young people; the program was adopted by the General Conference in 1960, in session in Reedley, California.³⁸

Furthermore, Mennonite Brethren were actively involved in the Mennonite Central Committee (P.C. Hiebert of Hillsboro, Kansas, served as its first chairman, 1920-53);³⁹ in Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS); in Mennonite Economic Development Association (MEDA); in Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA); and other organizations. MCC alone was involved in many kinds of aid, from refugee and war relief and agricultural training programs to mental health.

The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, therefore, had a far-reaching, multi-ministry program to administer.

In 1957 the board presented to the brotherhood the following statement of its philosophy.

2. The Philosophy Underlying the Work of This Board:

The philosophy underlying the work of this Board may be stated as follows: The work assigned to the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations is an integral part of the total mission of the Church in this world. Isaiah 61: 1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Our Lord said: "For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me, I was sick, and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me . . . in as much as ye

have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:35-36, 50b). The work of relief and evangelism go hand in hand in the church of Christ. Paul, as a missionary, recognized relief for the poor as a part of Christian service (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). As the church thus exercises compassion for suffering people, as it goes out to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" and ministers to those in need with relief and with the Gospel, the Church is following in the footsteps of her Lord. The work of this Board is the direct assignment of the total Mennonite Brethren Church and is believed to be essential for our total Christian witness. Every activity of this Board must have a clear connection with the mission and objective of the Church. Work which we do together with other Mennonite conferences through the MCC or other Christian groups must also be in the total scope of the Church mission. As the Board thus carries out its assignment it has the support and confidence of the brotherhood and enjoys the blessings of God.

3. Directives and Guiding Principles Governing the Work of this Board.

a. From time to time the General Conference gives directions to its boards in carrying out its assignment. The General Welfare Board received a list of directives and principles at our Conference in 1954 (*Yearbook*, pp. 21-22). These we have sought to keep before us and to put them into operation as far as possible. In our inter-Mennonite fellowship through MCC we need to work on with discernment seeking to cooperate in such ways and in such areas as are in line with our convictions and concepts.

b. Christian service to human need shall be supported by our conference to the extent that it falls within the context of our mission of the church and to the extent that its ultimate objective is to reach such people for Christ. As the Good Samaritan the Christian spirit of love bids us to care for the wounded and suffering.

c. All those individuals from our constituency who enter relief service, voluntary service, 1-W service or any other work directly connected with our conference or MCC service shall be born-again, baptized believers and in good standing with their home churches. Furthermore, those going into MCC service shall be well established in faith, possess a dedicated Christian motivation for service, and shall have the recommendation of their home church for MCC service.

d. Orientation for service under our Board or for MCC services shall be provided for all workers. This orientation should

point out to the worker the spiritual significance of this service and its close connection with the mission of the Church. This orientation shall be given in personal counseling by the local pastor, in orientation sessions with the Board office and/or in orientation sessions provided by Akron MCC headquarters.

e. The Board is ready to provide counsel and assistance to our young men entering government service. The peace witness shall not be promoted as something apart from the total Gospel of Jesus Christ, but as an inherent part of Christian discipleship. All work of the Board in promoting the peace witness is based on our statement of biblical nonresistance as defined and approved by our General Conference. It is the duty of the local churches to educate and it is the concern of our district and conference Committees of Reference and Counsel to teach and educate our members in biblical non-resistance. The Board stands ready, then, to provide and promote avenues through which conscientious objectors can best express their convictions in Christian love and service. The Board also stands ready to serve as a coordinating agency for a ministry to our members in government service. Peace literature shall be first approved by the Board of General Welfare and by the Reference and Counsel Committee before it is put to use in our churches.

f. Through this Board we cooperate with Mennonite groups and with the larger Mennonite and Anabaptist brotherhood in services which we cannot perform alone and in which we have common Christian convictions. Our Board shall stand ready to support such relief and service projects which shall fall properly into a truly Christian and evangelical witness and which are in line with the faith and policy of MCC (handbook pp. 23-24). When and where a new area or branch or service is contemplated by the MCC, our Board shall request from the MCC a clear statement of objectives which can be presented to our Districts and General Conference for review and decision.

g. It shall be the endeavor of this Board in consultation with other boards to ascertain the viewpoint of the Conference on important issues and thus bring a clear vote to MCC meetings and to meetings with other Mennonite groups in such efforts where we work together in the Lord's service.⁴⁰

Note that the document draws a distinction between the direct ministry of the Board and the ministries it is willing to share with MCC. The statement "We need to work with discernment, seeking to cooperate in such ways and in such areas as

are in line with our convictions and concepts" (3a, compare 3f) implies tension between the philosophies of the Board and MCC. Details are not spelled out and the historian is left guessing. Whether 3f has been followed consistently cannot be ascertained, though District and General Conference records are evidence of faithful reporting of MCC concerns to these bodies.

The records of the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations show that the board has performed nobly during its thirty years of existence. However, the restructuring of the conference, the assumption of large parts of the board's assignments by the U.S. and Canadian conferences, and the broadening of the ministry concept in the brotherhood seemed to dictate a merger of this board with the Board of Missions. To this merger we next turn our attention.

Merger of the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and the Board of Missions

Because of duplications, potential rivalries and conflicts of interest in Latin American and European ministries, tensions within the boards and constituency became noticeable. It was not easy to distinguish what constituted the assignment of one board or the other in geographical areas where both boards were present. Neither was it simple to delineate what constituted terminal relief ministry and what was to be continuous work. At some places, as in Germany (Neustadt) Austria (Linz), Uruguay (Montevideo), and Paraguay (Asuncion and Filadelfia), a ministry envisaged as temporary grew into a long-term work.

The way was paved for merger by the change in philosophy of service within society, with emphasis upon the "presence" of Christianity and the ministry to the whole man. The pattern of other Mennonite organizations (e.g. the Board of Missions and Charities of the Mennonite Conference) also contributed significantly to a change in attitude in the Mennonite Brethren churches, especially among responsible leadership.

It was therefore deemed advisable to merge the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and the Board of Missions into one board: the Board of Missions and Services. This

action was preceded by years of consultations, discussions and negotiations between the boards.

Again the Board of Reference and Counsel took the initiative. In 1957 the General Conference accepted the following recommendation from this board:

We recommend that the Board of Welfare continue to operate during the next interim, as heretofore, and that the three Boards, Board of Reference and Counsel, Board of Foreign Missions, and Board of Welfare, recommend a procedure of reorganization and function of the Board of Welfare before the end of the next two years of the Conference interim.⁴¹

It should be noted that merger is not suggested here. The concern of the brotherhood at that moment was the reorganization of the Board of Welfare. The recommendation grew out of that board's "Statement of Concern," which emphasized the need for a closer working together of the two boards.⁴²

In 1960 the General Conference passed a motion urging the two boards to meet annually in consultation in order to coordinate their ministries as much as advisable.⁴³ The result was a definite proposal by the Board of Reference and Counsel that the two boards be merged into one board, functioning in two commissions. Some aspects of public relations and the ministry of alternative service were taken out of the General Conference work and delegated to the U.S. and Canadian conferences. The new board, designated Board of Missions and Services, remained with a three-fold assignment: the ministry of foreign missions, the ministry of general welfare, and the ministry of the Christian Service program.⁴⁴

An appraisal of the 1966 mandate

We must keep in mind that the intent of the mandate (see p. 58) was to integrate two kinds of ministry, administered by two agencies. This appraisal concerns itself not with the expediency of the merger, but with the content of the mandate as worded in the recommendation and approved by the brotherhood.

Even a cursory reading of the recommendation makes us aware that the 1966 statement is related to the 1943 affirmation. In some ways it is superior because it is much more com-

prehensive. The breadth is necessitated because the document is intended to do justice to the constitutional assignments of both boards. The mandate proceeds cautiously to state the priority of gospel proclamation on the one hand, and approve service to the "total man in his total needs" on the other hand. It emphasizes evangelism; at the same time it honestly desires to lead the Mennonite Brethren churches into action as God's servant people, according to the example of Jesus in his compassion for people desperately struggling for survival and happiness. It breathes freshness and life.

Yet the statement suffers because of several actual explications and potential implications which deserve attention.

First, the mandate seems to lose its cutting edge because it is *too accommodating* to the many opinions expressed on the conference floor. The 1966 conference record indicates several lively discussions on the presentation, and numerous suggestions and amendments to the statement. Twice the original recommendation was rewritten before the delegation approved it.⁴⁵ It was considerably broadened and consequently also weakened.

Second, the affirmation is *too comprehensive* to be definitive as an assignment. It declares, "We are steadfast in the conviction that the gospel is intended to meet the total needs of man — spiritual, social, material or other basic human needs." This sounds superb. Such broad wording, however, hides the unique intent of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, it converts missions into general Christian ministries. This has serious implications for missions and has often been fatal to evangelistic missions, as history shows.

Third, the mandate is *too ideal* to be realistic. The integration of proclamation and welfare ministries in one board may at first appear healthy, even ideal. But history fails to give precedents of continuing dynamic movements based upon such a compound principle. Practically, it easily leads to confusion, vagueness, and frustration. The danger of misinterpreting such sweeping assignments has been well summarized by Bruce Nicchols in his editorial on evangelism as defined by the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization: "A narrow definition lessens confusion . . . *Church history shows that when this clarity is lost, the church loses its spiritual and mis-*

sionary dynamic" (italics added).⁴⁶ To some extent this seems to have been the experience of the Board of Missions and Services, as a study by "Christian Service," a research organization from Colorado Springs, Colorado, establishes.⁴⁷

Such an emphasis does not rule out welfare ministries. The church must remain deeply involved in service (*diakonia*), meeting the needs of humanity through relief, doing good, and demonstrating the compassion of God. However, to meet people in their "total needs" demands a broader base of operation than the church can marshal.

Two things deserve consideration. First, is it less a service to the "total man" when a body, the conference, renders such service through two agencies rather than through one? Do not our physical bodies use two arms and hands to do a comprehensive job? Must the right hand do it all? Again, must we not keep in mind that our Lord has ordained two institutions to meet humanity's total needs — the church and the government? Must the church assume the whole responsibility? Some of the burden of humanity's social and economic welfare needs to be left up to other institutions also ordained of God as servants.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that missions is a specialized ministry of the church. Its cutting edge is quickly blunted and its focus easily blurred by making the assignment of the sponsoring agency too broad, vague and indefinite.

It is too early to evaluate conclusively the broad mandate to the Board of Missions and Services. Eventually history will write the verdict.

The brotherhood has not found the 1966 mandate adequate or practical, and is searching for new and improved ways to offer the world evangelism and benevolent Christian service. Recent actions indicate a return to a narrower concept of missions by the Board of Missions and Services. This should not be interpreted to mean that the holistic ministry of the church is being minimized. Some assignments, however, are being made to other agencies, and Christian Service and MCC relief services have been made the responsibility of the national conferences of Canada and the U.S. Gradually each aspect of the holistic ministry will find its proper agent, so that administration can be efficient and effective.

Missionary determinants

Here we review the fundamental mission concepts of the Mennonite Brethren, their missionary purpose, and their search for a missionary partnership with the maturing national conferences as set forth in the records of the mission.

Missionary concepts

Mennonite Brethren missions was undergirded by biblical persuasions which gradually crystallized into defined convictions. These are stated as the following in the 1960 *Handbook* published by the Board of Foreign Missions.

Fundamental Concept and Purpose of Missions

1. Missions is the response to the command of our Lord to preach and teach the Gospel to every creature. The objective of evangelism is the calling out of a church for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church itself is God's instrument for evangelism. The planting of local churches as agents of evangelism is thus the central objective of the missionary program.

2. The character of the true Church must find its expression and test in Scriptural discipleship of the believer. "So likewise whosoever be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). The consistent relationship of a professing faith and a sanctified life constitute the basic testimony and strength of an evangelistic church.

3. The permanent aspect of the mission program rests in the national church, with its roots in Jesus Christ, its direction in the Holy Scriptures, and its organizational operation adapted to its respective culture. The missionaries and the mission program are a means to an end and must be looked upon as temporary in the building of a national church.

4. The criterion for the evaluation of every phase of the worldwide mission program is to rest in the issue: How does it contribute to the building of a national evangelistic church?

5. A mission program is subject to periodic evaluations on the basis of accepted standards established for a specific area to govern the development of the national church.

6. Instead of concentration of sizable groups of missionaries on stations or one area, the strategy is to assign missionary personnel to specific departments of responsibility relating to the whole field.

7. The value of a witness of a new convert is to receive central importance in the establishment of a national church. If the new convert is not encouraged to witness immediately after his conversion and become part of the fellowship of true believers, the most effective avenue of contacting the people for Christ is lost.

8. In close observation of each field and in consultation with the national church and missionary personnel, the home Board, through its administrative staff, seeks to give direction and counsel in matters of mission strategy. The church fellowship on the field, in consultation with the missionary, determines the most effective tactics of procedure.

9. The churches at home, in obedience to the Scriptural exhortation (Acts 4:23-31; Eph. 6:18-19), accept the responsibility for continuous intercession that the gospel of Christ will be preached in boldness and with power and assume the responsibility of faithful stewardship to provide the necessary means to carry out the assignment of Christ to His Church.⁴⁸

(Note: the 1966 edition of the *Handbook* adds the significant concept that missionary involvement is the expression of the nature of the Spirit who indwells the children of God as well as of obedience to the command of Christ.)

Some of the presuppositions in these paragraphs are open to debate. It is the position of the author, after reviewing board records and private discussions with the then functioning secretaries, A.E. Janzen and J.B. Toews, that this statement was not intended to be a philosophical statement on absolutes in mission, but rather a practical guide. For this reason it does not differentiate specifically between principles and practices. Points 1, 2, 3, 7 and 9 are principles of abiding value. However points 4, 5, 6 and 8 are practices and therefore relative. The statement is thus temporary, as a missionary enterprise in any given place is temporary. The repeated revisions of the charts of administration and the *Handbook* — six revisions in 18 years⁴⁹ — show continuous modification, addition and subtraction, often to the bewilderment of the missionaries they were intended to guide and of the national churches.⁵⁰ They are a pilgrimage rather than a permanent statement.

Many of these modifications were necessary because of the

rapidly changing world scene, the transformation of continents from colonialism to nationhood, the transition from mission-centeredness to church-centeredness on the mission field.⁵¹ Large educational institutions and expanding medical programs were developing, for example, particularly in India and Zaire (Congo). These were engaging a majority of the missions staff. They were also absorbing considerable amounts of subsidy. One purpose of the statement was to correct this trend and prevent further proliferation.⁵²

The statement was also issued in response to circumstances looming on the horizon. Mission executives felt that sooner or later most institutions would be nationalized by newly formed independent governments of the Third World. They feared that nationalized institutions would not continue to serve the church or maintain the evangelistic thrust for which they were organized. The only institution that could be expected to function truly autonomously, they felt, would be the church.⁵³ Rightly or wrongly, it seemed wise to the board to focus on a responsible, functioning national church. The statement may therefore be considered as pragmatic in intent.

On the other hand it must be admitted that the administration was using a trial-and-error method to arrive at the best-known accommodation to pressing demands, the best possible solution to tension between the mission and national churches.⁵⁴ The reader therefore should be neither too high in his praise nor too harsh in his criticism. Mennonite Brethren during this time were faced by unprecedented transition and had few historical models to follow. The Lord has given grace for the transition, and no serious disruptions have been registered. The movement has been spared large group secessions.⁵⁵ The work has stood the pressures of time and change and is continuing to the glory of the Lord. Much credit for this must go to the missionaries, who built a church not around themselves, tradition, or form, but around the Lord and the Word.

These allowances having been made, the statement of "Fundamental Concepts and Purpose of Missions" requires further evaluation. After all, it is foundational for the guidance of an ongoing movement. The statement was approved by the conference and therefore expresses not only the opinion of the

board;⁵⁶ it stands as a conference document and represents the direction of the brotherhood in foreign missions at that time. It should be kept in mind that this statement was made prior to 1966 and the actual merger of the two boards.

It seems to this author that the *initial statement* on the nature and purpose of missions is too limiting, making mission a narrow, one-stream activity. Is mission concerned only with preaching the gospel? While such a narrow definition gives the movement a clear and precise focus, making for singleness of thrust,⁵⁷ the Mennonite Brethren have from the very beginning practiced a three-pronged approach to missions—evangelism, teaching, healing. In this the brotherhood has not wavered, at least not in practice.

Second, the statement limits the motivation in mission too exclusively to the command of Christ. This converts mission too easily into a legalistic activity. The 1966 edition of the *Handbook* brings in a wholesome correction and deserves notice: its emphasis on the Holy Spirit is much needed.

The document appropriately turns from mission-centeredness to church-centeredness, seeing missionaries and mission program as a temporary means to an end, which is the building of a national church. The document might have mentioned, for the encouragement of missionaries, that if they successfully worked themselves out of a job they would be redeployed in another place — a practice followed by the China Inland Mission, now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. When it was forced out of China, CIM developed a ministry in east and southeast Asia, so that many of its former China missionaries found a new field of activity.⁵⁸

The emphasis, that the national church is God's instrument in evangelism, that the permanent result of the missionary program is the national church, seems to reiterate a genuine Pauline concept of mission. Though there is nothing wrong with this emphasis, the serious limitation of the statement is that it emphasizes evangelism as the only service of the national church. No doubt this was not in the mind of the board and the brotherhood, but the statement does imply that.

The reason for such narrowness seems to lie in the fact that the mission concept was carried over to the national church, and thus point 4 delineates the ministry of the national

church purely in terms of gospel proclamation, self-government and self-support. No social and cultural responsibilities are mentioned, nor are the important functions of worship, fellowship, perfecting, maturing, discipling, and serving. This seems rather unfortunate.

It is the author's impression that here one of the general weaknesses of American evangelism speaks through the pen of the board and brotherhood. Evangelical missions as a whole have been weak in emphasizing that the members of the church are to function as "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." They have been trained to be church members, but not Christian citizens of the land and Christian members of society. Because of this, evangelical Christians have made only limited contributions to the social and cultural uplifting of their communities and countries. The missions have created churches in their own image and not in the full-orbed image of Jesus Christ and the New Testament. To a marked degree they have failed to "teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded you."⁵⁹

This does not contradict our previous discussion on the role of a missionary. A mission society, operating in a foreign land, is not the church of the land. It has neither the same privileges, responsibilities nor broad assignments. This is why it is wise to distinguish between the mission of the church and the church in mission. The former refers to the *total assignment* of the church, which is many-faceted. The latter is a *specialized ministry* and aims principally, though not exclusively, at planting and maturing responsible churches able to perform the whole God-ordained ministry. The author, therefore, prefers to speak of a "responsibly functioning church."

The emphasis upon "the value of a witness of a new convert" is wholesome, as is the emphasis upon prayer.

The discussion of periodic evaluations, standards of evaluations, and stationing of missionary personnel reflects a missionary philosophy often discussed and disputed. The policy has found neither universal application and whole-hearted endorsement, nor outright rejection. It is a matter of individual mission policy, with the pros and cons about evenly divided.

Thus stands the document on "Fundamental Concept and Purpose of Missions." The concepts and purpose are biblical and precise. However, they leave a certain void. On the face of it, they do not express the full scope of missions, and limit the ministry of the national church too severely.

Missionary purpose

The document goes on to express the purpose of missions in four brief statements, accepting biblical teaching as a basis:

1. To present the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to every one in the area of a mission field.
2. To baptize those who accept Jesus Christ by faith.
3. To organize and establish such believers in local churches for nurture.
4. To unite the local churches of a field into an organized conference and convention which is the church that continues the proclamation of the gospel, directs and regulates its own church affairs, and meets its own financial requirements.⁶⁰

Clarity and singleness of form give the statement dynamic force and thrust. Its narrowness, however, is evident; it shows the same weakness as discussed in the preceding section. In part such limitation can be excused because at that time the Board of Missions functioned as a separate board, some social ministries being left to the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations. That the missionary purpose had to be considerably enlarged when the two boards merged is evident. The new board has wrestled repeatedly with the issues of a more comprehensive purpose, but no clearly defined statement has come forth.⁶¹ Consequently, no clear image or focus has emerged and progress has been uneven and impeded.

Most seriously limited in this definition are the function and ministries of the national church. One reason for a narrow view is that the "how," the method, of establishing national local churches was not always clearly perceived or consistently pursued. The tension between extensive sowing in evangelism on the one hand, and intensive ministry in a limited area on the other, surfaced again and again. Both phases of the ministry were accepted. The missionary responded to the urgent need to give every individual an opportunity to hear the gospel; at the same time he faced the pressing need to lay a solid foundation

for a healthy and responsible church. In mid-century missions, urgency for extensive evangelism usually prevailed.⁶² At no time, however, was the goal of establishing a responsible national church forgotten by missionaries or board. It was always envisaged that the time would come when the mission would hand over all the work, authority, property and rights to a duly constituted national Mennonite Brethren Church. The missionaries would progressively retire, the work of the mission having been completed.

Because the tension between extensive-intensive ministry was to be resolved or sufficiently balanced, weaknesses in the local congregations became apparent when support in foreign personnel was withdrawn and the churches had to function on their own.⁶³

The drastic changes after World War 2, the growth of national consciousness in many newly independent countries, the changed climate of attitudes toward missions because of the renaissance of ethnic religions and cultures, and the maturing of the national churches brought about changes more radical and more rapid than many missions and missionaries were ready for. This was true also of the Mennonite Brethren work.

It became evident that the national churches had to assume the responsibility of guiding their own affairs. The changeover from mission control to national autonomy took many missions by surprise. It also found many churches almost totally unprepared to shoulder the burden of responsibility for the sometimes extensive work that had grown up. A type of fraternal paternalism had kept the churches in a position of dependence. Consequently, their maturing had not proceeded as hoped and now demanded of them. The transition found many of them in a state of bewilderment.⁶⁴

Tensions multiplied. There were tensions within the national churches, and also between the national leaderships and missionaries and Board. However, nowhere did these tensions result in secession of any large group of churches. Individual members and individual churches did withdraw from the brotherhood because of internal friction and nationalistic tendencies. In recent years serious disruptions have been caused in India by a U.S.-based mission, so that a number of pastors and more than half-dozen churches seceded from the

Mennonite Brethren Convention (financial gains seemingly were the major reason for withdrawal).⁶⁵ In general, however, the work established by the Mennonite Brethren mission has remained in fraternal relationship with the brotherhood in North America.

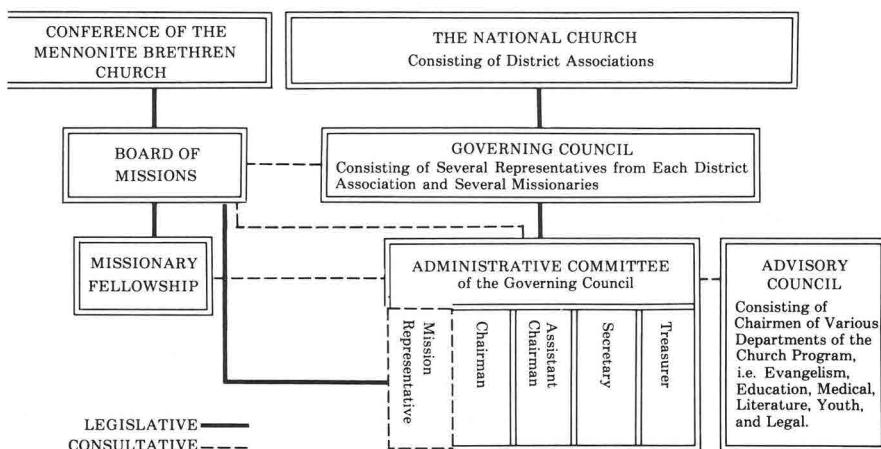
Thus while the mission purpose as presented in 1960 is theologically too limited and may be justly criticized, it proved to have a certain pragmatic value in the severe test of time. The churches have come through, not unscathed but in fellowship and ready for ministries. Their vision, purpose and ministry need now to be broadened and brought in line with the total message of the New Testament.

Missionary partnership

Over the years the board, missionaries and national churches have wrestled with the issue of mission-church relationships. Piecemeal arrangements were worked out, only to be replaced by others.

In 1960 the board negotiated some guiding principles with missionaries and national churches, establishing a pattern best presented in a chart:

**Organizational Relationship of the Conference of the
Mennonite Brethren Church with National Churches Abroad**



It is evident from the chart that this pattern established an unfortunate dichotomy between the Board of Missions and the national churches, one which could have imperiled the progress of missions. In all probability missionaries would eventually have been totally separated from the churches, or missionaries and mission would have been integrated into the national church. Though the second alternative, integration, may seem good and desirable — in some places missions have had to accept it and adjust themselves to it — historically it has proved detrimental in many missions. Historians and missiologists have continued to caution against either complete integration and fusion of mission and church, or complete dichotomy and disassociation. A higher level of partnership is preferable.⁶⁷

After 1960, uneasiness among board members and missionaries prompted the search for a more ideal partnership between mission and national church. A new attempt was made in a document presented to the General Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in August 1963. The following statement on "Obedience in Partnership" was read and approved:

Obedience in partnership

1. Statement of Gratitude

The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church expresses deep gratitude to God for His blessings upon the missionary outreach of the brotherhood in obedience to the commission of the crucified, risen and ascended Christ. The churches and groups of believers which have resulted from the ministry of the gospel stand there as tokens of God's grace and mercy. The Conference sends greetings to our sister churches in India, Japan, Europe, Congo, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Indonesia with the words of Paul the Apostle: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:2-6).

2. Fellowship in Mutual Edification

The Conference acknowledges, in deep gratitude, its spiritual oneness in Christ and recognizes the inward affinity

which binds us to our sister churches aboard. They have been called out from the world to a spiritual fellowship of believers which supercedes all national loyalties and extends beyond racial divisions. We recognize ourselves as one brotherhood of the Mennonite Brethren Conference international, with Christ as our head and we His members.

To nurture our spiritual fellowship in Christ and with one another, we propose to send brethren from our churches to the fellow believers in other lands for a ministry in the Word and in return welcome brethren from sister churches abroad, such contributions in spiritual ministry to be considered for shorter and longer periods of time.

3. Obedience in Partnership

As Conferences of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America we propose a united obedience to the missionary assignment of Christ in a program of partnership in opportunity and responsibility to extend the message of salvation to the multitudes of our generation who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such obedience in partnership is to be visualized through the following channels:

(a) Through the creation of mission committees in the M.B. churches and conferences to stimulate mission interest in a more vital expression of our responsibility regarding the commandment of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 24:46-48).

(b) Through the recruitment of personnel from churches to join the ranks of missionaries sent to other lands with spiritual undergirding and financial support from their home constituency.

(c) Through a general, active responsibility for financial resources to extend the outreach of evangelism around the world.

4. Obedience in Identification

To be effective in the obedience of partnership in evangelism and edification, we recognize the importance of the Biblical principle to express our spiritual affinity in mutual identification which rises above the level of cultural and economic differences. "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22).

Our missionaries in various parts of the world, who serve as co-laborers with our sister churches, we exhort that they identify themselves with our fellow believers by integrating into the structure of the local fellowship as members of the respec-

tive churches and remove all differences of rank and position.

5. Our Commitment of Obedience

In response to the trust of God, who has called His church for the purpose of evangelizing the world, we call upon the sister churches in various parts of the world to assume greater responsibility for the financial support and spiritual direction of the program in their own localities in order to free mission personnel and resources for the extension of the gospel to other areas. The Conference instructs the Board of Missions to proceed in the formulation of a definite program which will lead to the reduction of subsidies for the maintenance and support of existing spiritual fellowships around the world in order to channel these resources into the wider expansion program to reach other people who have not yet heard.

In obedience to the missionary call of our Lord we wish to clasp hands with our sister churches abroad in partnership of dedication to the great work of training a witnessing church to extend its message to the people round about that the body of Jesus Christ can soon be gathered and the return of our Lord hastened.⁶⁸

This document contains some explosive concepts. It speaks of "one brotherhood of the Mennonite Brethren Conference international." It alludes to an exchange of ministries. It refers to "a united obedience to a missionary assignment of Christ in a program of partnership in opportunity and responsibility."

The proposals under (a), (b) and (c) were innovative and could have revolutionized the face of Mennonite Brethren misisons. They provided for recruiting workers from various countries and placing them side-by-side with North American missionaries.

The North American missionaries are urged to integrate and become a part of the regular ongoing movement of the churches (point 4). On the other hand, the churches are urged to assume responsibilities in legislation and administration to free missionaries for further pioneer ministries (point 3).

Perhaps the statement is not altogether consistent. It attempts to say too much at once. It is a policy document expressing tensions as well as several intentions. The document

is based on several fundamental assumptions which seem to the author to be unrealistic and ahead of their time. It presupposes a unified international Mennonite Brethren brotherhood bound together in purpose and function, and a unified international sending agency. It assumes the readiness of all churches to join in partnership in response to the challenge of world evangelism. It also assumes the ability to transcend all cultural, sociological and psychological individuation, envisioning international teams laboring side-by-side over prolonged periods of time without serious tension or frustration. "Obedience in identification" is not as easily achieved as the document assumes. The idea of such partnership seems more a Western ideal than the result of joint consultation and action.

No one can say what the results of such innovative policy would have been had it been pursued vigorously. Three facts, however, worked against its fruition. First, there was uneasiness and hesitancy on the part of some board members over certain statements and their historical implications. Second, the administrative personnel in the board office changed, and the incoming secretariat was too new to implement such a far-reaching policy. Third, the Board of Reference and Counsel presented a series of new recommendations on international conference relationships to the 1966 conference convening in Corn, Oklahoma.⁶⁹ These recommendations were approved by the brotherhood.

The new regulations established the combined conferences of the United States and Canada as the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, and set forth guidelines for the relationship of this General Conference to Mennonite Brethren conferences outside the North American continent.⁷⁰ These guidelines cut across several basic premises upon which the Board of Missions had been building their framework of cooperation with the national churches, as outlined in the 1963 statement on partnership. Naturally, the 1966 recommendations by the Board of Reference and Counsel superseded previous decisions. As a result the 1963 statement by the Board of Missions became obsolete.

The Board of Missions was not totally unprepared for such a change. A policy commission of the Board had conducted several study sessions during the interim between 1963 and

1966.⁷¹ A statement on interrelationships and partnership had been prepared. The document was read to the 1966 General Conference and was approved to serve as a guide in a new venture into partnership. The statement is printed here to show the thinking of the board and the brotherhood at that time.

Mission Organization in Relation to the National Conference

With the establishing of a national conference (having officially adopted a constitution and the Confession of Faith of the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches) the work of missions enters a new phase which alters not the purpose nor the personnel but the legislative and administrative relations of the Mission to the work. While legislation and administration of necessity has been unilateral heretofore, the principle of partnership, of equality and mutuality should become operative. Legislation and administration thus become bilateral and require much negotiation and mediation. Only as mutual understanding and confidence prevail will there be a true brotherhood.

1. Guiding Principles in a Partnership of Equality and Mutuality:

a. The national conference is sovereign in the administration of its church ministries and church affairs, including its own budget.

b. The mission is sovereign in the administration of mission ministries and mission affairs in areas geographically or ethnically unrelated to the Conference unless otherwise agreed upon by both partners.

c. The conference and the mission are partners in the mission outreach to the unevangelized areas and communities or in the opening of new areas in close geographic proximity of the conference.

d. The assignment of the missionary shall be mutual agreement between the mission and the conference and cannot be altered by unilateral action of either partner.

2. Principles to Guide the Relationship and Assignment of the Missionary, the Missionary Fellowship, the Field Secretary, the Advisory Committee, and to Regulate the Budget, After the National Conference Becomes Established. (Note: This section is to be negotiated with the National Conference.)

a. The Missionary

(1) All missionaries shall constitute an integral part of the

national conference with all rights, privileges and responsibilities.

(2) All missionaries are eligible to be elected by the national conference to serve in conference committees.

Missionaries should avoid constituting a majority in a committee. In respect to his ministry a missionary should not accept responsibilities in too many committees or in a committee that could interfere with his assignment.

(3) A certain number of missionaries will be needed to minister within the national conference in a Bible teaching program, in pastoral assistance, and in professional services. These ministries by missionaries must not be denied to the national churches, and they will absorb a certain number of especially qualified missionary personnel for an indefinite period of time.

(4) Principally, a missionary's ministry must be one of "missions." Thus only can he truly fulfill his missionary calling and do justice to the "sending churches." The missionary's main ministry is to the unevangelized world. This evangelism program, however, must be "church-based" and actively involve the national churches. Hence a missionary's evangelistic ministry must be rendered through the church, but not primarily to the church but with the church in an expansion program.

(5) The administration of ministries of missionaries — functioning within the national conference is under the administrative body of the national conference in consultation with the secretary who administers the expansion program, and who in turn is responsible in these matters to the Board of Missions.

b. The Missionary Fellowship and MAC

(1) MAC discontinues when a national conference has been properly organized (see Mission Organization in relation to the National Conference, p. 15); the Mission Administrative Committee (MAC) as an administrative body is dissolved. From that point on any administration of missions or the expansion program is under the field secretary.

(2) The Missionary Fellowship and Executive Committee. As long as there are several or more missionaries on the field, the missionary fellowship continues. The missionary fellowship elects three officers, which constitute the executive committee of the fellowship. The duties of the executive committee of the fellowship are listed under d., page 11. The executive committee is also to assume the pastoral responsibility in relation to the missionaries as stated in c. (2),

pages 12 and 13. The Board of Missions may delegate additional responsibilities to this committee as needed and deemed advisable. However, in matters of administration, as it relates to the missionary program of the Conference, the Board will communicate directly with the administrative body of the national conference through the field secretary.

c. The Field Secretary.

(1) *Appointment.* When the national conference duly functions, the administration of missions or the expansion program shall be directed by a field secretary mutually agreed upon and responsible to the Board of Missions and the administrative body of the national conference. Such secretary should preferably live on the field to become involved in missions and in the national conference.

(2) *Eligibility.* The field secretary may be chosen from the home constituency, or from the missionaries, or from the membership of the national church. The field secretary must be acceptable to the national church, to the missionaries on the field, and to the home Board.

(3) *Liaisonship.* The field secretary is not a member of the home Administrative Secretariat, though he exercises liaison functions between the national conference and the home Board and Secretariat. If he is a member of the missionary fellowship, he should not involve himself extensively in its activity nor hold office in the executive committee. His responsibility, duties and functions are to be negotiated with the home Board.

d. Advisory Committee to the Field Secretary

Three brethren elected by the governing body of the national church, and the three executive officers of the missionary fellowship shall constitute a consultative and advisory committee to the field secretary.

e. Triennial meetings

In order to cooperate efficiently and aggressively it is expedient that the national conference, the field secretary, the Board representative, and the missionary fellowship meet triennially to review the work and draw up a three-year's program of advancement to be presented to the national legislative body and the home Board for review and approval.

f. Budget for church expansion

The budget for the church expansion ministry is to be mutually agreed upon, preferably on a three-year basis and shared on a percentage basis between the national conference and the mission. It can be subject to annual review.

A number of questions were asked and answered. It was moved and seconded that recommendation 2 be accepted to serve as a guide and basis for negotiation and that this guide be subject to revision as the interests of the work of missions should require. Carried.⁷²

The document recognizes the following principles:

(1) Partnership in missions is an essential factor in a brotherhood operation.

(2) Partnership is entered into voluntarily. It cannot be dictated or demanded. It comes about by mutual understanding, agreement and trust.

(3) Partnership has clearly defined limits. It does not affect the national church's in-church operations. Nor does it affect the Board in operations outside the geographical confines and ethnic relationships of the national church. It affects evangelism and mission operations in which the church and the mission are involved together.

(4) In partnership, unilateral legislation is not acceptable; legislation is by negotiation and mutual consent.

(5) Partnership preserves the integrity and authority of the church as well as the mission, and enriches the life of both institutions.

(6) Partnership in mission is the expression of fellowship in Christ; it is a true mark of Christian brotherhood and mutual servanthood (Phil. 1:3-6).

The document was modified on regarding "The Field Secretary," opening this position to some other possibilities.⁷³

The board has not been altogether successful in negotiating partnership relationships with the national churches, partly because of the merger of the two boards, which took place at this time. Understandably, the new board was not well acquainted with the field situation or the progress of negotiations. Then, too, a new secretariat took over operation of the headquarter's offices. Because of the ensuing hesitation and delay, time for consistent negotiations slipped away. An opportunity was momentarily missed by default. However, negotiations are proceeding. A modified form of partnership has evolved in some countries.

In most countries a cautious "national unilaterality" prevails. This author is concerned that the Board of Missions

and Services might become a "handmaid" to the national churches. Already it seems that the Board has become largely a church service agency. Services to the churches must not be permitted to become the dominant and permanent central thrust of the Board when some three billion people in the world have yet to be evangelized. At this writing the Board seems to be wrestling seriously with the issue, seeking to regain the momentum in mission in some fields of operation. Some bright lights are appearing on the horizon.

The August, 1975 General Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, became a turning point in the history of missions in the Mennonite Brethren churches, if the author interprets correctly the recommendations and the direction of the Board of Missions and Services. The conference approved several recommendations of far-reaching significance:

- (1) It approved the sending of missionaries to Indonesia to assist the Muria Christian Church of Indonesia, *Gerja Kristen Muria Indonesia*, in its program of evangelism and church extension.
- (2) It ratified a recommendation to respond positively to invitations from independent, indigenous, evangelical church movements in Africa to assist them with personnel in Bible teaching.
- (3) It endorsed the opening of a new work in Spain, should the board deem it advisable and find it possible.⁷⁴

The first two recommendations marked a departure from traditional Mennonite Brethren work, for neither the work in Indonesia nor in Africa is Mennonite Brethren-related. This new approach will test the maturity of both the board and the missionaries, since the work is with bodies of believers outside traditional Mennonite backgrounds. Yet the move will prove beneficial to both the churches in the field and to the Mennonite Brethren if the work is done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Reports indicate a favorable and enthusiastic response by the brotherhood, signaling that mission is still a live issue in the churches.

Discussions question for Chapter 3

1. *Mennonite Brethren churches are largely the product of migration. Should conscious migration of communities of*

Christians to new lands be considered as a viable form of mission strategy, either as a truly Christian form of mission or as a necessity where visas for missionary work are difficult to obtain?

2. To the question, "What is the mission of the church?" the Mennonite Brethren have answered a holistic ministry to both the soul and body. Is such a total approach realistic? Can a single mission organization or missionary carry out both types of ministry without losing the balance between them, or is it better to administer these through two different church organizations? But if we do the latter, do we not make an un-biblical division between witness and service?

3. There has been considerable debate on whether the Mennonite Brethren Churches should channel most of their efforts for Christian ministries such as relief, education and medicine through Mennonite Central Committee rather than through the Board of Missions and Services. Discuss the pros and cons for various approaches to the division of labor between BOMAS and the MCC.

4. Successful missions leads to the creation of a new church. Should missionaries continue to minister in this church, and if so, what should be their roles? At what point should they be removed so as not to weaken the autonomy of the local church and yet not to leave it when it needs assistance?

4

MISSION ORGANIZATION

The organization of Mennonite Brethren mission as reviewed in this chapter has to do with home management — the Board; field management — missionary qualification and field council; finances — treasury and endowment fund; and the nurture of mission interest.

*Central management of missions: the Board**

That the management of mission has been a pilgrimage, as the several constitutions, handbooks and board records amply prove, is neither surprising nor disappointing. Progress and growth always demands change. We may conveniently divide this growing process into several periods:

- A period of orientation, 1885-1896
- A period of stabilization, 1896-1909
- A period of conference jurisdiction, 1909-1936
- A period of board centralization, 1936-1963
- A period of reorientation, 1963-1969
- A period of realignment, 1969-1980

A period of orientation, 1885-1896

The first mention of any offices in relation to foreign missions is found in the conference report of 1885. The previous year the conference had assumed responsibility to support one evangelist in India. This venture necessitated creation of a new treasury. A committee of Managers of Foreign Missions

*The managing board has been known officially as the Committee of Foreign Missions, the Board of Foreign Missions, the Board of Missions, and the Board of Missions and Services. Here we refer to this committee simply as "the Board."

Treasury was appointed, Cornelius Wedel of Lehigh, Kansas, becoming the first chairman of an administrative committee of eight members. Each member was charged with receiving funds from his respective district and forwarding them to the chairman, who in turn sent the money to the various missions and missionaries as designated by the conference or assigned by donors.¹

In addition, a provisional committee was appointed at the 1889 conference in Minnesota, consisting of Elder Abram Schellenberg, Kornelius Wedel, and John F. Harms. This committee was charged with the special task of locating a mission field among the North American Indians.² In 1892 the first permanent committee for work among the North American Indians was appointed by the conference, with authority to open work as soon as possible.³

Thus the conference had two committees, one for administration of the treasury, the other for supervision of mission activity among the North American Indians. This arrangement was retained until 1896, when its inefficiency was recognized.⁴

A period of stabilization, 1896-1909

At the 1896 conference at Ebenfeld, Kansas, the delegation found it advisable to appoint a Committee of Foreign Missions. The occasion for reorganization was the dispatching of several Mennonite Brethren couples as missionaries by the German Baptist Mission Society of Berlin for work in Cameroon, Africa. The duty of this committee was to keep an eye open for young people whom the Lord would call for service in foreign countries and then to take the steps necessary to open work there. John F. Harms was appointed treasurer, Elder Abram Schellenberg the chairman.⁵

Though no official action is recorded, reports indicate that this committee absorbed the work of the two earlier committees. Nevertheless the representatives in the local churches retained their duties of collecting and forwarding funds to the central treasury.

In 1898, because of the appointment of the N.N. Hieberts to India, a directorate consisting of all local church leaders of the Mennonite Brethren churches was formed to serve as an

advisory council to the Committee of Foreign Missions, or, as we shall call it, the Board.⁶

The American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union. On April 11, 1899, the Board met in consultation with nine leaders and fifty representatives from the Kansas churches. Here it was decided to open an independent work in India and work in close relationship geographically with Mennonite Brethren from Russia, though remaining financially and administratively independent. The suggestion came from missionary Abram Friesen, who attended the consultation. It was also decided to prepare *Statuten* (official guidelines) for the mission and to prepare for incorporation. It was understood that these matters would be brought before the conference for ratification.⁷

A solid foundation for the management of foreign missions was laid in 1900 at the conference in Buhler, Kansas. Here the first constitution for foreign missions was adopted and incorporation approved.⁸ (*See Appendix B.3, p.212*).

Soon after the arrival of the first missionaries in India, the search for a suitable mission location was begun. The missionaries realized that in order to acquire property in the name of the conference, a charter was necessary. Thus N.N. Hiebert petitioned the Board to hasten securing of the charter. The Board immediately took up the matter and informed the congregations of the need for a charter and an endowment fund. They also drew up a preliminary constitution to serve as by-laws for the corporation.⁹

At the conference in Buhler, Kansas, in October of 1900, the question of incorporation was discussed and the prepared constitution studied. Some changes were made in the constitution; then a resolution was adopted to form a corporation known as the Mennonite Brethren Mission Union. The body was duly incorporated according to the laws of the State of Kansas and registered with the State Charter Board in Topeka on November 20, 1900, as verified by George A. Clark, Secretary of State.¹⁰ (*See Appendix B.4, p. 216*).

This document is characterized by several peculiarities. First, the purpose of the Union, as stated in the charter, concerns itself primarily, and according to the constitution, exclusively, with foreign missions. This seems to be a characteristic peculiar to the Mennonite Brethren, if not to all Men-

nonites. Mennonite Brethren were a foreign mission-minded group.

The second peculiarity is the name of the corporation. It is "The American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union," not "conference." This choice of term was no doubt due in part to the influence of the American Baptist Mission Union, which was well known at the time.

At the same time the Union was but an enlargement of the small "mission unions" which existed in local congregations to stimulate mission interest through annual conventions, monthly meetings, distribution of mission literature, mission sales, and the gathering of funds for mission projects. It was expected that this larger Mission Union would unite and energize the local unions and thus make for a concentrated, united work. Later history proved the wisdom of this temporary accommodation in the name of the corporation.¹¹

It is evident from the records that strong autonomy was still asserted by some churches, for not all were prepared to move independently of the Baptists. In the Buhler church, for example, a rift resulted in the congregation and a separate group was formed for a brief time, all because of the move to an independent board.¹²

We also note that the first constitution provided for honorary membership in the Union for "all children of God outside of the Mennonite Brethren Church that are supporting this work." Though no specific churches are mentioned, this opening was directed mainly to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church, which had no overseas mission of its own at that time and lived in close and harmonious fellowship with the Mennonite Brethren churches.¹³ Records show that discussions favoring a united work had been carried on for some years. Here was an opportunity for the Krimmer churches to come under a "Mission Union" charter and work together with the Mennonite Brethren.¹⁴ The Krimmer conference had, in fact, decided at its October 1898 meeting in Jansen, Nebraska, to send the Heinrich V. Wiebes to India. A mission committee had been elected to direct and advance the work, the Wiebes being instructed to depart for India as soon as possible.¹⁵

All these circumstances seem to have played into the choice of the word "Union" — a diplomatic choice indeed.

Revision of the bylaws. Defects in the bylaws soon became evident, so that a general revision was undertaken at the 1903 conference in Henderson, Nebraska.¹⁶ Though no reason for revision is stated, at least two are implied in the recommended improvements. First, the need was apparently felt to link the mission more closely with the conference and local churches, for a directorate of nine persons was elected by the conference to assist in the direction of the work of the executive committee. Second, it seems that some felt the need to limit the independent action of the Union, particularly of the chairman. Provisions were made for the chairman to undertake no independent action without approval of the directorate, and it was emphasized that the appointment of the directorate was by the conference and not by the Union.¹⁷

A period of conference jurisdiction, 1909-1936

The charter and constitution of 1909. The inadequacy of the charter and the constitution became more evident as the church grew. More autonomy was required by the widely spread churches to initiate and supervise ministries.

A new constitution was adopted at the annual conference convening at Sued-Hoffnungsfeld, near Isabella, Oklahoma, in October, 1908.¹⁸ The constitution were filed on February 18, 1909, with the State Charter Board of Topeka.¹⁹ (*See Appendix B.5, p.219.*)

The year 1909 proved to be a turning point in the development of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. Not only was the original charter amended and the constitution changed, but an overall restructuring was undertaken. The General Conference was divided into four district conferences: Northern (Canada), Central, Southern, Pacific. These were to meet annually to transact business relating to local work. The General Conference, which thus far had met annually, was to meet triennially and deal with matters concerning the total brotherhood. At this point we are concerned only with the effect of this restructuring on foreign missions.²⁰

The most important change was the dissolving of the Mission Union so that the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America would become the responsible body for the foreign missions enterprise.²¹ Another significant

change was the discontinuation of the administrative committee which represented the local congregations and advised in the decision of the Board. The management of missions was now limited to the Board of Directorate and the Executive Committee, a body of nine men.²² The structure of Board/field relationships was left unchanged; they continued to work alongside each other on terms not clearly defined.

The constitution of 1936. No changes in the constitution are reported from 1909 until 1930, when at the General Conference at Hepburn, Saskatchewan, a committee was appointed to revise the constitution of the conference.²³ But it was not until 1936 at the conference in Reedley, California, that the revised constitution was adopted.²⁴ (*See Appendix B.6, p. 221.*)

Several important changes in the administration of foreign missions were introduced. The directorate of nine members, which had served as liaison between the conference and the executive committee, was dissolved. The Board of Foreign Missions was now to consist of only five members, organizing itself into chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, and treasurer. This Board was placed directly under the conference, with no other advisory or consulting body.²⁵

The new constitution provided for the organization of conferences by the missionaries on a specific field, with considerable rights and privileges.²⁶

An important step was the provision for assigned gifts. These were to supplement income for activity which the regular treasury could not cover. Provision for the children of missionaries, who thus far had been looked after through conference resolutions, became constitutional.²⁷

Thus there is evident progress in the new constitution of 1936 over the constitutions of 1900 and 1909.

This may be the best point to finish the story of the constitution. The 1936 constitution has been changed in a series of revisions, which have affected both the size and authority of the Board. In 1951 the Board was enlarged to nine and in 1960 to thirteen members.²⁸ The 1963 constitution set the number at thirteen and specified the areas of representation. It also spelled out a new pattern of organization for missionaries on the fields: in line with the new pattern of mission-church rela-

tionships, the missionary conference was changed into a missionary fellowship and an administrative committee created.²⁹ Since 1966 the Board has fifteen members as a result of the merger.³⁰

A comparative study of the constitutions demonstrates that the Mennonite Brethren Church is neither dead nor static. Perhaps it also shows that Mennonite Brethren are not quite certain of the way in which they are to walk, at least not *how* to walk in it. The constant changes may also reflect lack of adequate research, farsightedness and long-range planning. The official documents and conference reports betray an inclination to be a people of occasion and immediate needs, a weakness that the brotherhood would do well to recognize and remedy.

At present the Board is elected for a six-year term, except the member-at-large, who serves for three years. The United States and Canada are equally represented. The Board's legislative authority is limited only by the General Conference and the national conferences in the various lands where new Mennonite Brethren conferences have arisen. The Board administers the programs of foreign missions, Christian Service, and welfare to Mennonite Brethren churches in lands abroad.³¹ The task is large and challenging.

A period of centralization, 1936-1963

From the constitution, conference resolutions and official records, one gets the impression that centralization in a board continued steadily in this century in the once strongly congregational Mennonite Brethren Conference, which managed itself on a brotherhood basis and where common consensus became binding for all.

The first step toward centralization in foreign missions administration had been made at the 1909 conference in Henderson, when the administrative committee representing the various local congregations was eliminated from the management of foreign missions, and a directorate of nine men was substituted for the larger body.³²

The next step had come in 1924, when the Board was authorized to appoint missionaries without a vote of approval at the General Conference in session.³³

Time and circumstances seemed to dictate both changes. After 1909, when the conference moved from annual to triennial business meetings, centralization became necessary, since it would have been difficult and expensive to convene the Board, as then constituted, for annual business sessions.

A major step toward centralization came in 1936 when a new constitution was adopted. This constitution dissolved the Board of Directors of the Board of Foreign Missions and placed mission responsibility into the hands of a board consisting of five members. At the same conference the office of executive secretary, or secretary-treasurer, was created.³⁴ When that office was occupied by a member of the Board, the move to centralization was firmly established. The trend has never been curbed effectively. More and more power has been vested in the Hillsboro and Winnipeg offices. The provisional constitution of 1954 provided for the separation of legislation (Board) and administration (secretariat); but such separation does not necessarily imply a weakening of the administrative branch.

Centralization and the missionaries. With centralization complete at home base, the constitutionally implied missionary partnership was soon necessarily modified. Correspondence indicates that setting up a new relationship involved many years of tedious negotiations, struggle, and serious tensions.³⁵ It affected mainly two areas: the deputational ministry of the missionary, and the partnership between Board and Field Councils.

Deputation. Gradually the deputation ministry of the individual missionary was brought under the direction of the head office.³⁶ In the early years there were few missionaries, and churches waited eagerly for any reports a visiting missionary could bring. A vast amount of information was printed in the *Zionsbote* and *Christian Leader*: personal experiences, descriptions of success or failure, quarterly and annual reports of missionaries. Such material kept missions a live issue in North American congregations.

As the missionary force increased, many more were doing deputation, though missionaries also began spending time at college or seminary rather than traveling extensively. Methods of reporting changed: competition with commercially produced missionary films and with reports by church

members who had privately visited the field seemed to dictate a more professional kind of duputation.

Reporting in the *Zionsbote* and *Christian Leader* also changed drastically in the 1950s and 1960s. Brief summary statements issued by the office replaced lengthy missionary reports. Personal sharing with the congregation was replaced by official reporting.³⁷ This, despite the fact that personal notes, articles, testimonies and prayer letters from missionaries are the most effective way of building missionary-church relationship and motivation.³⁸

As matters developed, little initiative was left to the missionary to promote projects for the field, share in mission education in the home churches, or assist in financial promotion. More and more these concerns became concentrated in the office of the Board.³⁹ As a consequence, the home secretariat had to be enlarged to keep up with assignments in the churches. These changes were not prompted by impure Board motives, but, as it seems, by circumstantial necessity and the need for efficiency.

It became evident that missionaries and churches were growing apart. Missions became impersonal and was in danger of becoming an enterprise of the Board alone.

As a wholesome attempt to remedy the situation and bridge the gap, the Board assigned individual missionaries to four or five churches, thus establishing a "home-church relationship" with these churches. This has proved to be a wise practice: it seems to recapture some of the previous sense of "belonging" between church and missionary.⁴⁰ It is also encouraging that in the past years more personal prayer letters are being sent to the churches.

Relationship of Board and Field Missionary Council. The partnership between the home Board and the Field Missionary Council is nowhere clearly defined. The early constitutions merely provided for a Board at home and a Council in the field of operation. The constitution made only general assignments to the respective bodies; details were not spelled out, neither were definite principles of procedure prescribed. The arrangement was filled with ambiguity and potential tension, if not contradiction. It was assumed that the brotherhood relationship would take care of these matters.⁴¹ Thus from the very

beginning, partnership in legislation and administration was envisioned. In other words, the Board took care of things at home, while the missionaries took care of legislation and administration needed on the field. Both bodies had relative veto powers, and from time to time exercised such power. Most legislation was done by negotiation.⁴²

In what position, exactly, was the missionary placed by the provisions of the constitution?

The constitution of 1900 provides for a field committee, known as a Field Council, consisting of all active missionaries on a field. The same constitution specifies that such a committee is subordinate to the managing Board; that it is to assist the Board with counsel and recommendations; and that it is to carry out the directives of the Board. The constitution provided for a "Mission Directorship" made up of (a) the Managing Committee of sixty persons, (b) the Executive Committee of four persons, and (c) a committee consisting of all missionaries on a given field.

The responsibilities of the Mission Directorship were stated as follows:

(a) The Managing Committee and the Executive Committee have the supervision of the total mission work, particularly the selecting and sending out of missionaries, opening of mission stations, receiving and dispensing of funds, etc.

(b) The Executive Committee has the additional responsibility to carry out all details of business related to the cause of foreign missions, excepting such as the Conference or the Managing Committee may reserve to execute.

(c) The committee consisting of all missionaries is subordinate to the Managing Committee and the Executive Committee and is to assist committees with counsel and to execute the directives of the committees.⁴³

The 1909 constitution modifies the above wording somewhat and substitutes for the word "subordinate" the words "stand at the side of" the managing Board. No legislative power, however, is vested directly in the missionary committee.⁴⁴ This is understandable: the conference constituted the sole legislative body.

The 1936 constitution is somewhat ambiguous in wording. Some of its statements are open to different interpretations. It reads:

Section 2. The Managing Committee. The responsibility of directing the foreign mission work rests with the Board of Foreign Missions *and* the committee consisting of all missionaries that are in active service . . .

Section 3. Clause 2. (a) The Board of Foreign Missions has *full control* over *all* foreign mission work . . .

Section 4. (b) The organization of the work on the field is left to the respective missionaries. Likewise the arranging of all local affairs of the field rests in their hands.⁴⁵

Though no legislative authority is mentioned, there is a certain partnership implied in the wording which allows the ministries more liberty and greater authority than did the previous constitution. The ambiguity has not been eliminated, and perhaps even increased. Whether desired or not, ambiguity sooner or later leads to tension and conflict.

Tension did, in fact, arise between Board and Field Councils because of the following trends: (a) an increase in the number of mission fields and missionaries who held differing philosophies of missions; (b) the rise of national consciousness in host countries, accompanied by radical social, cultural and political changes; and (c) the maturing of national churches and consequent nationalization of the work. The conflict was specifically over the *pace* of indigenization. Negotiations during repeated visits to the field by the secretariat and Board members seemingly did little to improve the situation. By 1956 it became evident that the Board/Field Mission Council partnership had reached a crisis.⁴⁶

A second factor complicated resolution of differences. The Board was convinced that the Board/Field Mission Council partnership had to give way to a Board/National Church partnership. As seen by both Board and national leadership, this necessitated the dissolution of the Field Missionary Council as a legislative and administrative body.⁴⁷ The Board, perhaps overanxious for control, could not envision a three-way negotiation and a three-body partnership.

For good or for ill, the Board felt itself pressed into an unpleasant and unwelcomed situation. Another step toward centralization seemed inevitable. After carefully studying the world situation and trends in world missions, and having sought the counsel of noted missiologists, the Board prepared

a lengthy statement setting out changes in missions and how they affect mission policies and recommended radical changes. This statement was presented to the General Conference convening in Yarrow, B.C., in October 1957.⁴⁸

The major issue in the document is the transfer of legislative authority from the Field Missionary Council to the Board at home or to the national church abroad. The Missionary Council became a Missionary Fellowship, and the national church was recognized as an autonomous body. The new pattern gave the Board as well as the national church freedom to develop a partnership of equality and mutuality.

The statement is of sufficient significance to be printed here.

**Statement of the General Conference of the M.B. Church on
the Effects of the Changes of Our Age on the Worldwide
Missionary Assignment**

The missionary ministry of the M.B. Church from its inception was a spontaneous expression of its scriptural faith and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, in which the responsibility for the ministry to a large extent was assumed by the missionaries called out of their midst, and the churches at home constituted the praying and supporting background of those who went out into the field.

The part of the church at home, through its appointed Board was to watch carefully over the spiritual qualifications of those whom the Lord called out and appointed to the ministry abroad, leaving to the individual missionary the greatest share of the responsibility for the method of work, pattern of program, and standards of accomplishment. The administrative structure limited itself to the coordination of the various mission interests in order to assure the workers on the field the needed support.

The extension of our mission program has continued to be largely of a spontaneous character without a careful study of fields, pattern of work tried in respective fields, or an effort to establish a directive program and strategy for the missionaries who were sent out. The general philosophy of missions called for men and women who would go out "to bring the gospel to the millions who are lost," not requiring the acceptance of directives or established standards to follow. The spiritual motivation of an obedience to our Lord's command constituted practically the inclusive requirement for the task.

The status of our missionary program up to this day cor-

responds to the above stated philosophy, which is true in its motivation, sincere in its efforts, and sacrificial in its devotion, consecrated in its support on the part of the constituencies. The major emphasis rested in the responsibility "we must win the lost for Christ."

The world-wide revolutionary changes of the post-war era, effecting every phase of the international, national, social and religious life of our generation, exert a severe testing upon the missionary accomplishment of the past and its program for the future. The impact of the changes establish beyond question that the time of a fixed routine pattern of mission program has out-lived itself. The assignment of a missionary for a stationary ministry of evangelism with a lifetime to continue in the same place as the central figure of a perpetual program results in a reactionary protest of the nationalistic-conscious native of all lands. With the growing international rejection of all colonial imperialism there has also arisen a principal rejection of the "missionary-centered" gospel ministry.

The effect of the above-given observations on our missionary program of today are far-reaching and demand considerable adjustments for the future in the area of our missionary approach and administrative direction. The qualifications for missionaries of the new era in many respects differ from those of the past. Methods of field operation and measurements of accomplishments also are undergoing revision.

The distinct standard of accomplishment of our day requires an operational administrative policy which is more concentrated than that of the past. The major emphasis does not limit itself only to the point of outreach, but rather the establishment of an indigenous church which can assume the responsibility for the evangelization of its own constituency, even though the missions may be required to withdraw. With the church-centered emphasis the responsibility of the evaluation of the work cannot be left to the individual missionary alone, but must be assumed by the corporate judgment of the missionaries on the field together with the Board and the church at home. Periodic administrative visits to the field by members of the Board and administrative staff have therefore become a necessity.

To meet our charge of the missionary assignment, we must be prepared under God to effect some changes in our methods of administration at home and on the field. It requires new standards of qualifications of missionaries and will also demand new methods in some areas of the work. A hesitancy on

our part to consider such needed changes may result in a loss which will far exceed the values which we hope to preserve by avoiding the required adjustment.

The Board of foreign missions together with the missionaries on the field are deeply conscious of the responsibility that rests upon them in these days of changes. Every effort is being made to find the needed light and direction that under the guidance of the Lord we may meet the challenge before us.

The Board covets the special intercessory prayer of our Conference for its difficult responsibility. It invites the assistance of brethren from our constituency who under the Lord can help in bringing light in the many important matters involved. The Board would also covet the sympathetic understanding on the part of our churches if some changes in personnel would have to be effected to assure a most fruitful ministry on the various fields.

Knowing that many of the leading brethren of our Conference together with us have been conscious of the stated developments, the Board would greatly appreciate any statement of direction from the Conference for the future discharge of the most sacred responsibility of bringing Christ to the millions of the unevangelized countries while it is yet day.

The discussion that followed this presentation indicated a sympathetic response by the delegation.

Various brethren openly shared their viewpoint on the proposed action and its benefits.

A motion passed that the statement be accepted.⁴⁹

The statement of the Board, though at first glance quite innocent, was revolutionary. It concentrates all legislative and administrative authority in the Board, removing missionary partnership from both, as the next issue of the *Handbook* clearly indicates.

History seemingly dictated the radical act of the Board. One senses from the records that even the Board wished it would not have been necessary. The author cannot avoid the impression that efficiency, if any, came at the expense of brotherly relationships, at least on some fields and with several missionaries. According to the record, the document had not been presented to the Field Missionary Councils for response and modification.⁵⁰ It also came as a surprise to the brotherhood, as the conference report shows.⁵¹ The Board proceeded unilaterally, which seems to be contrary to its earlier

practices. It seems to the author that here idealism, organizational goals and momentary expedience prevailed over the spirit of true brotherhood.

It is also evident that the document was not worded cautiously enough to avoid misunderstanding and personal offense. Later correspondence and field documents from India, for example, show that it does not give sufficient credit to the degree of indigenization already achieved in India.⁵² However, the document stands as presented and printed.

Upon the approval of the policy statement by the General Conference, centralization became complete. All legislation and administration rested with the Board and in the home office. It has remained that way, except in some fields where the Board seems to have experienced at the hands of the national church what the missionaries first experienced at the hand of the Board.⁵³

A Period of Reorientation, 1963-1969

It is not overstating the situation when we say that the years 1963-1969 were years of reorientation. The activity of the Board in those years was complicated by several factors.

First, there were several changes in the secretariat.⁴³ These naturally severely hampered, if not impeded, the work. It takes time for a secretariat to orient itself to a proliferated program serving in a number of countries.

Second, the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations merged in November, 1966, at Corn, Oklahoma.⁵⁵ This action of the General Conference, upon the recommendation of the Board of Reference and Counsel, was received with little enthusiasm from either of the boards involved.⁵⁶ It was easy to pass the resolution creating the Board Missions and Services, but it was not easy for the boards to melt together and truly become *one* board, despite good intentions. Of the three programs thus merged, foreign missions, voluntary service, and relief, the latter has suffered most.

Third, the rapid transition from a field program administered by missions to a church administration program on a number of mission fields added to the complications at the home base. Somehow the philosophy of partnership as approv-

ed by the General Conference at the Corn, Oklahoma sessions in 1966 was not always understood fully and applied consistently. Serious frustrations were experienced by the Board and in field operation.⁵⁷

Fourth, international relationships and political tensions in the world affected every area of operation, including missions. To guide the enterprise steadily and on an even course, wisdom, strength and endurance were needed. Not surprisingly, the Board and secretariat made mistakes.⁵⁸

Fifth, the merger of the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations in 1966 brought the rapidly expanding Christian Service program under the management of the new Board. This neither simplified nor clarified matters. While many rejoiced over the acceptance of the program, several matters came up for repeated discussion: Is it wise for a Board which has its major field of operation outside of the United States and Canada to administer and relate itself to a large Christian service program at home? Is there the danger that short-term service may become a substitute for the missionary calling and actually keep young people from entering full-time missionary service? Is it wise for a Board with the main objective of evangelism and church planting to sponsor a large Christian service program which in its essence is not evangelism and church ministry (although certainly good in itself and indirectly contributing toward such ministries)? These are questions which surfaced in the Board. It must be emphasized that the value of Christian Service has never been questioned, but the sponsorship of such a program on the home front by the Board has been seriously discussed.⁵⁹ The Christian Service program in the United States and Canada has since been delegated to the respective area conferences.

Sixth, the failure to meet budget expenses caused no little concern to the Board. This failure was not due to decline in church offerings, but reflected sky-rocketing inflation in many countries, so that the cost of living rose out of all proportions to conference contributions. The Board was suddenly forced to operate with an alarming deficit.⁶⁰ While the endowment fund proved valuable in bringing temporary relief, it did not remedy the situation. The lack of decisive and consistent action by the

Board produced restlessness among the missionaries, national churches and the home constituency. The Board then sought the counsel of a "Christian Service" agency, realizing that the way out of this increasingly difficult situation could come only through intelligent studies, decisive leadership, much prayer, and confidence in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁶¹

Several factors enabled the Board to remain in operation and soon function in the black again. (1) A frank admission to the constituency caused the churches to rally in a remarkable way, with a significant increase in giving.⁶² (2) The Board was also able to negotiate with the Board of Trustees the transfer of several valuable properties, liquidating considerable sums of indebtedness to the endowment fund administered by the Board of Trustees. (3) Finally, this crisis became the occasion for a much-needed, comprehensive review and restructuring of the total program, something which should have happened years earlier.⁶³

A Period of Realignment, 1969-1980

Realignment has affected the total framework and philosophy of Mennonite Brethren missions. It radically changed the structure of missions in the area of operation, the nature of assignments and the placing of responsibilities for the work.

The February, 1970 meeting of the Board was the turning point. Meeting in the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, the Board was pressured by a sagging treasury to take a realistic look at its assignments and possibilities. The minutes indicate that discussions centered around the need to design an overall strategy in the light of present-day moods and possibilities. Realignment of the Board's ministry would have to take place if evangelism was to become the central thrust again.⁶⁴

After lengthy deliberations, a special commission of three Board members and the general secretary was commissioned to review the total program and personnel requirements, and to propose a new course to the Board. The Board agreed to meet in May instead of September to study the proposals of the commission.

After meeting several days in Fresno, the commission

recommended that the Board make direct evangelism central in all its work and keep its involvement in institutionalism to a minimum; that the selection and assignments of missionaries be guided by the above principle and, where needed, the missionaries be reassigned or repatriated and rehabilitated; that the Board negotiate with the Mennonite Brethren Church of India to discontinue its direct missionary involvement in Mennonite Brethren territory in India by the end of 1972, or as soon as possible thereafter.

This last recommendation was based upon several important factors. First, it was believed that strong and responsible national leadership existed in the India Mennonite Brethren Church. Second, it was the consensus of many missiologists that Christianity is held to be a Western religion by numerous people in Asia, especially in India, and the presence of missionaries reinforces this prejudice. Third, it seems to be the nature of missions that the presence of missionaries keeps the national churches from discovering their true selves and their own resources. Fourth, in view of the depleted funds the Board had to cut back somewhere. It was felt that the India Mennonite Brethren Church would suffer least by such a cutback. It was the oldest sister church — Mennonite Brethren missionaries had served there for more than seventy years. It must be recognized that there is such a thing as *strategic withdrawal*, even in the mission fields. Later experiences have shown that the administration in the field has had serious difficulties. However, in the villages the work is progressing well.

The commission further recommended that the Board adopt the following missionary strategy for the 1970s.

Mission Strategy for the 1970s

1. To concentrate on the development of autonomous national churches in all fields.
2. To enter into full partnership with the national churches in extensive and intensive outreach of evangelism and church planting, particularly in larger cities and high potential areas.
3. To conduct, in full collaboration with national churches (where such exist), extensive programs of "Thrust Evangelism" by means of evangelistic and Bible teaching teams in order to do justice to the wide-open doors.
4. To establish clusters of churches for fellowship and strength rather than enter widely scattered areas in evangelism and related ministries.

5. To develop relationships between the national churches and the home Board and office that will fully respect the autonomy of the various national churches and yet be ready to be of greatest assistance to the programs sponsored in the various fields.

6. To withdraw missions personnel, especially from institutions, as rapidly as possible and, by means of temporary grants, make it possible to the national churches to replace such withdrawals with national workers.

7. To respond to invitations from churches from which missionaries are being withdrawn for short-term ministries. They may be in the form of Bible teaching and special assignments or projects for the purpose of fellowship and mutual edification.

8. To concentrate on the training of national leadership to assume the responsibilities of all ministries in the churches and institutions. This may require provision for scholarships to recognized institutions rather than establishing the necessary schools.

9. To expand the usage of technological means such as radio and television for the propagation of the gospel and develop appropriate literature and correspondence courses to strengthen the contacts and build the churches and believers.

10. To assist the national churches with negotiated funds to develop social and economic projects which will enhance the life and testimony of the churches in their community.

11. To assist the national churches to develop a strong and appropriate Bible teaching ministry on the local church level by various means and methods.

12. To develop in the home churches a strong program of Bible teaching ministry in missions in order to focus our churches on the priority of world evangelism and deepen the missions motivation in all levels in our churches.

13. To build a program of finances that will incorporate various patterns of solicitation and giving and tap sources thus far not sought out, such as foundations and corporations, etc., even beyond our constituency.

Thrust Evangelism. It was suggested that the Board initiate a program of evangelism known as Thrust Evangelism as part of the overall new strategy for the seventies. The commission recommended the following guidelines and program for the new thrust:

1. Select a strategic, high potential area in the countries in which we now are represented.

2. Plan a concentrated effort of evangelism for a 1 to 3 year

period using all ingenuity and forms of evangelism appropriate to the situation.

3. Begin the thrust with a coordinator who would develop the thrust program and call for a team, asking for help of the national church, the mission, and workers from other countries.

4. Plan a schedule of preparation and campaigns including follow-up.

5. Plan to leave clusters of churches with a minimum of supervisory personnel until the churches are sufficiently formed and established.

Two simultaneous campaigns each year should be planned. \$100,000 per campaign per year should be appropriated for the work. A tentative schedule of thrust evangelism would be as follows: Southern Brazil, 1971-73; Colombia, 1972-74; Europe, 1974-76; Brazil, 1975-77; Congo, 1977-79; Japan, 1978-80.⁸³

The proposal of the commission was circulated to members of the Board in advance, and the Board adopted the new program in principle. A change in the total structure soon became noticeable. Somehow new life began to pulsate through the mission structure. Brazil pioneered a restructured program of Thrust Evangelism with vigor, and Paraguay pursued it with great enthusiasm and relative success — through 1982, as many as fifteen or sixteen new fellowshipping groups have emerged as a result of the program, according to John Wall, secretary for Latin America. Furthermore, negotiations with the Mennonite Brethren Church in India as outlined earlier, were concluded and the national church shouldered the responsibility for the total work. It seemed that missions would receive a new impetus.

Reports indicate that realignment soon bogged down.⁶⁵ The author has not been able to uncover with certainty the reasons for the frustration. Therefore, he can only surmise from interviews with national leaders and missionaries that the Board was not able to negotiate an effective "partnership in obedience" with the national conference, nor was it able to provide the inspiration and guidance needed to keep the new program moving as initially envisioned.⁶⁶ Records indicate that for some time candidates were not coming forward as expected. There seemed to be a strong tendency towards pro-

liferation rather than consolidation, with further expansion in the fields already partially occupied. There is little evidence of long-range projection with definite goals.

However, the momentum is gradually gaining speed. New candidates are making themselves available. A new venture has been launched, recruiting young people as "Good News Corps" workers — a three-year period of evangelism and church planting work under the guidance of experienced missionaries. The program holds considerable promise as it seems to appeal to young people and is drawing some into new fields of labor. It is too early, though, to evaluate its long-term effectiveness.

At this writing, a new impetus seems to be emerging. It may be that the action of the 1975 Conference has turned the ebb into a tide. The presence of a good number of representatives from the Third World at the 1978 conference, and an international consultation on evangelism immediately following the General Conference bode well for the future. Such mutual undertakings are sound factors in building a stronger bond of fellowship and confidence, and a deeper level of partnership. It remains for the Board now to profit from this new climate with its possibilities. There is good interest in the constituency, and expectations are high.⁶⁷

Missions management: the field

Appointment of the missionary

A word must be said here on the qualifications of missionaries as laid down by the Board, and the method used for their appointment.

Missionaries to foreign countries have been held in highest esteem in Mennonite Brethren churches. They have been considered persons singled out by the Lord for a special ministry, so that for many years the appointment of the missionary was considered a lifetime assignment.

Qualifications. The Mennonite Brethren Church has been principally a lay movement. It has, therefore, never held to rigid, precise educational prerequisites, either for ordination to the ministry or for appointment to mission work. Yet certain conditions were considered essential for the missionary.

The constitution of 1900 lays down the following essentials:

Brethren and sisters desiring to be sent out by the Mennonite Brethren Mission Union:

must be members of the Mennonite Brethren Church,
must have been found approved in their life and faith,
must have received an adequate educational preparation,
must be physically in good health,
must have the confidence of the conference.

The last statement is qualified thus:

In order to gain the confidence of the conference it is necessary that such brethren and sisters be actively and successfully at work in the conference for at least three years; however, if they already have gained the confidence of the conference and if there is a need of workers they may be sent earlier.

The constitution of 1909 added an essential requirement by stating that the applicant must be "in good standing with his home church and obtain from it a recommendation for service in foreign mission work." This shift to the local congregation is significant. The individual churches were maturing and were beginning to speak to the conference.

The 1936 constitution restates the above requirements but adds nothing new.

In 1947 the first handbook was published by the Board under the title, *Foreign Missions Guiding Principles and Field Policies*. Here more than three pages are devoted to the definition of requirements for candidates. They constitute a fairly balanced and scriptural demand.

The spiritual standards of the workers

1. *Confession of Faith.* All workers and candidates serving at home or abroad under the Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America shall give clear evidence of and wholeheartedly subscribe to the following: The new birth by faith in Jesus Christ; being definitely called into His service; possessing a desire and love for Christ and a passion for souls; having faith in the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and believing in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true man and true God; that man was created in the image of

God, that he sinned, and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also that spiritual death which is separation from God; that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood; that each individual must experience a personal regeneration, being born again of the Holy Spirit by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby becoming a child of God; believing in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into heaven, and His present life for us, as High Priest and Advocate, and in His personal and imminent return; believing in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked; and that a life conforming to the teachings of Christ is an essential evidence of a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *Subsequent Status.* Should any worker subsequently change his views on the cardinal points stated above, he must inform the Missionary Council or the Board of Foreign Missions and be prepared to resign his connections with the Mennonite Brethren Mission Service if requested to do so.

The candidates

1. *Responsibility of the Candidates.* Candidates for foreign mission service should acquaint themselves with the requirements and policies of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and should offer themselves only if they definitely and heartily approve of them and earnestly desire to practice them. Candidates should seriously and prayerfully count the cost of going into foreign mission service. Faithfulness in sacrificial service and reliance upon Christ and His Word, however, will result in measures of joy, peace, satisfaction, and strength that far outweigh any sacrifice a worker is making for our Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel. (Mark 10:29, 30.)

2. *Personal Qualifications.* It is recognized that no list of qualifications can cover all cases; variations and exceptions may be made with respect to the individual candidates and also in regard to the different fields of service. The responsible governing body — The Board of Foreign Missions, has the right to pass on the applications. The following standards may serve as a guide even when they cannot be applied as an iron rule.

(a) Age Limit. 24 to 35 years is considered by most mission societies as the best age for the acquisition of a new language.

(b) Health. Only those candidates should be accepted for service in foreign fields who pass a thorough medical examination.

(c) Education. The Board recognizes that no list of special educational requirements can cover all cases. Some variations and at times exceptions will need to be made with respect to the individual candidates and also in regard to different fields of service. In general, however, the following educational standards are applicable to all candidates and to all fields:

(1) In addition to having finished the high school or its equivalent, all missionary candidates should have a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

(2) Special training with the generally recognized certificates or degrees is required of missionaries who wish to serve as doctors, nurses, or teachers.

(3) A missionary who is to have charge of a station should have acquired a college education and completed a theological course.

(4) In the case of married missionaries the Board will consider the educational requirements met when the husband meets the standards herein set forth. In addition to meeting point number (1), the wife should endeavor to acquire as much other training as family circumstances allow.

(d) Experience. It is well that the candidates have at least one year's experience in the homeland in lines of service similar to those in which they expect to engage on the mission field. Originally our brethren required three years. During this time the candidate should give evidence of efficiency, tact, and of love for souls (II Cor. 5:14a).

(e) Character. High ideals in social and business relations, common sense in dealing with others, steadiness of purpose, ability and willingness to work harmoniously with others, cheerfulness of spirit, absolute adherence to the path of virtue — these are qualities that every missionary must cultivate.

(f) Family Relations. The mission fields offer fine opportunities to single ladies. Some boards do not hesitate to send single men; but it is best that they marry before they go to a foreign mission field. Children in the home of a missionary are not considered a hindrance, and the missionary's home on the field is looked upon as a distinct ministry in furnishing a social pattern of a model Christian institution. But when the family has become large and especially when some of the children are of school age, parents need to consider seriously whether their first duty does not tie them to the homeland.

where they can give more adequate care to the precious young souls that God has entrusted to them.

(g) Financial Obligations. The vocation of the missionary calls for heavy sacrifices and seldom offers abundant rewards in monetary values. It is therefore highly desirable that the new missionary discharge all of his financial obligations before entrance upon this work. It will be hard to pay debts with savings from a missionary's modest salary. Moreover, to have found ways and means to liquidate one's own obligations is one of the finest recommendations that a young person can have.

(h) The Call from God. This is of highest importance, and every candidate should be clear on this point. It is a subjective qualification of which the missionary alone can speak with certainty. But one needs to remember that this subjective call will be corroborated by qualities listed above. When the Holy Spirit called for the separation of Barnabas and Saul, the call found a ready response by their associates and the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

3. *Making Application.* A candidate who feels called of God to missionary service in a foreign land and who has conferred with the leadership of the local church shall, upon request, receive an application blank from the executive secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions. This blank is to be filled out and returned for consideration by the Board.

4. *Acceptance by the Board.* The acceptance of the candidate, his further preparation, the appointment for service, his financial support, his proceeding to the field, shall be under the direction of the Board of Foreign Missions through the office of the executive secretary.

The 1959, 1961, 1963 and 1966 editions of the handbook add and modify minor matters. However, the requirements remain substantially unchanged.

The 1963 constitution provides that missionary candidates are to receive their advanced (theological) training in Mennonite Brethren institutions. This is not a negative reflection on other institutions, but a move toward greater unity of approach to theology and mission philosophy in the field.

It is clear that spiritual qualifications rather than academic achievement were looked for, that loyalty to God and the Mennonite Brethren Church were considered the supreme qualification. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that educational preparation was neglected. The first missionaries

were trained mostly in the Rochester Baptist Theological Seminary; J.H. Pankratz, F.J. Wiens, J.H. Voth, N.N. Hiebert trained in part at McPherson College.⁶⁸ Thus these men had good preparation for their time. In general it is expected that male missionaries should have completed college and have some seminary training. Single women should qualify either for teaching, hospital service, or some other special professional ministry.⁶⁹

Appointment. Principles for appointment of a foreign missionary were laid down in 1896 at the conference at the Ebenfeld MB Church near Hillsboro, Kansas. Although the constitution does not provide for a definite method, the following procedure became the pattern until 1924.

The interested person informed the pastor of his church of his personal desire to become a foreign missionary, requesting that his desire be reported to the Board. The Board would then contact the local church for more information about the volunteer, and a recommendation. The volunteer would fill out a formal application for foreign missions service. With the recommendation from the home church and the application for service in hand, the Board would recommend the volunteer to the conference for appointment, either at the regular session of the conference, through letters to the local churches, or through announcement in the *Zionsbote*. The conference held the right to approve or reject the appointment of any candidate.⁷¹

In 1924, at the conference in Corn, Oklahoma, the Board was authorized to appoint or reject applicants without consulting the conference. Such appointments were still subject to conference review and could, technically, still be rejected.⁷²

The above procedure has been modified considerably. The Board, while still reporting appointments to the conference, now has sole jurisdiction in appointing candidates for any type of service abroad. (Christian Service appointments are, in fact, in the hands of the secretariat, the Board reviewing the appointment to approve or disapprove; regular missionary appointments are made by the Board.)⁷³

Term of service. The 1900 constitution does not specify the term of service on the field. The 1909 and 1936 constitutions speak of seven to eight years, followed by a furlough. The 1963

constitution does not specify a term. However the handbook of 1947 makes it seven years, and the 1959, 1961 and 1963 handbooks prescribe six years. The 1966 handbook provides for a flexible schedule, the time of service to be negotiated between the Board and the individual upon consideration of the needs of the missionary and conditions on the field.

With the merger of the two boards, the tremendous expansion of Christian Service, the radical changes in the various host countries, and the proliferation of types of service, no clear pattern is now discernible. Individual assignments and contracts are made to fulfill certain ministries rather than take up a fixed term.

Relationship of the missionary to the Board — constitution and handbooks. The partnership of Board and missionary has already been discussed, but will be briefly repeated here with more emphasis on field organization.

Early constitutions granted the missionary considerable liberty, authority and autonomy. In the 1900 constitution the missionaries of a given field were constituted into a missionary committee which functioned alongside home management. Paragraph V, however, subordinates the committee to the Board.

The 1909 constitution leaves the above order unchanged.

The 1936 constitution delegates considerable authority and liberty to the missionaries, who were constituted into a Missionary Council. Section 2 specifies that the responsibility of directing foreign missionary work rests with the Board of Foreign Missions and the Missionary Council, thus in effect coordinating the two bodies. Section 4 defines the authority and responsibilities of the missionaries, but ambiguously, so that some rather unpleasant experiences resulted. In Section 6, Clause 6, the missionaries are obligated to report to the Board semi-annually "on finances and the work together with recommendations for providing for the mission work." It was further desired "that all missionaries report frequently on their work and if possible send quarterly reports to the editor of the *Zionsbote* for publication."

The 1947 handbook outlines the following more detailed pattern for field administration:

The field organization, policies and work

A. *The Organization of a Mission*

1. *The Mission*

(a) *The Mission Unit.* A mission of one continuous geographic area or field is regarded as a unit for organization, co-operation in the work, and fellowship, as well as in its relation to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

(b) *Mission Stations.* Each field may have stations arranged on it as recommended by the Missionary Council according to need and as approved by the Board of Foreign Missions.

2. *Missionary Council*

(a) *Membership.* All the missionaries duly appointed and sent out by or through the M.B. Board of Foreign Missions and who serve on any one specific field shall constitute the Missionary Council of that field.

All the members have a right to vote, hold office, and participate in the work of the Council according to the regulations set up by the Council itself.

Missionaries are expected to be present at the sessions of the Council and to work in cooperation with it.

(b) *Meetings.* The Missionary Council shall have as many meetings as are advantageous. If possible there shall be two meetings annually.

The meetings shall be partly intended for fellowship, prayer and assistance of the missionaries; the program shall be arranged accordingly.

At the meetings all necessary business of the Missionary Council shall also be taken up for deliberation and disposal. The missionaries are to submit their reports and requests to the Council. At these meetings the whole work of the field is to be planned and ordered, missionaries are to be stationed and their work assigned. Plans and recommendations are received from the Board of Foreign Missions and provision is made to carry them out. Recommendations and requests are likewise made by the Council to the Board of Foreign Missions for consideration and approval.

(c) *Organization.* In order to facilitate the cooperative efforts of the missionaries, the Council shall organize. At the first meeting of the year the officers, chairman, assistant chairman, secretary, and treasurer are to be elected. These are elected for one year and are eligible for re-election. (In countries where incorporation or other legal relations of the mission to the government demand an election for a period of

years, the chairman (or president) of the Missionary Council may be elected for a period of years consistent with such requirements, but in no cases shall an election be binding beyond three years. Longer terms are provided only by re-election.)

The Missionary Council of a field is at liberty to frame a constitution by which it regulates its proceedings and work. Such a constitution must, however, be in harmony with the general principles and policies of the Board of Foreign Missions.

(d) Duties of the Officers

1 — The Chairman is to preside at all meetings of the Council and with the approval of the other officers he may call special meetings of the Council.

2 — The Assistant Chairman shall, in the absence or inability of the chairman, take his place.

3 — The Secretary shall record and preserve the minutes of the meetings of the Council, and shall send an official copy to the Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions. He shall also carry on all the official correspondence of the mission.

4 — The Treasurer shall handle all the funds of the Mission. He is to receive remittances sent by the Boards of Foreign Missions through its treasurers for the maintenance and purposes in general of the mission. He is to make all payments on behalf of the mission, stipulated in an approved budget or authorized either by the Council or by the Board of Foreign Missions. He is to keep the funds which he has in charge on deposit in a reliable bank or banks and keep accurate records of receipts, payments, and balances. He shall prepare and submit a semi-annual financial report of the Missionary Council as well as to the Board of Foreign Missions, accompanied by appropriate correspondence, if necessary, relative to financial information and records of the mission.

3. The Administrative Committee of the Missionary Council

(a) *Membership and Office.* An Administrative Committee composed of the Chairman, Assistant Chairman, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the Council and of two or more additional members elected by the Council shall be established. The officers of the Council shall also serve as officers of this Committee.

(b) *Administrative Oversight.* The Administrative Committee shall have the general oversight of the work on a field, and shall take care of matters which must be ordered in the interim between meetings of the Council. This Committee may discharge any task assigned to it, either by the Mis-

sionary Council or by the Board of Foreign Missions. It may also submit to the Missionary Council recommendations regarding the work, the stationing of missionaries, and the budgeting on the field.

(c) *Jurisdiction Over New or Returning Missionaries.* New and returning missionaries upon arrival on the field will be temporarily stationed by the Administrative Committee until the next meeting of the Missionary Council, which shall make further provision.

4. Other Committees

The Missionary Council may appoint or elect such other committees at its meetings as the interests of the work may require: e.g., Educational, Hospital, Building, Publication Committee, etc. Each committee thus provided is authorized to carry out the work assigned to it.

It should also be mentioned that the missionary councils, with the approval of the board, had their own constitutions to guide them in organization and administration.

A radical change was introduced in 1957, when the Board received conference approval and full authorization to restructure the whole organization of mission management and bring it in line with what seemed to be the demands of the times. The national church was given priority; the Missionary Council was dissolved and transformed into a Missionary Fellowship with no legislative authority, as the following outline on the purpose of the fellowship clearly shows.

The Missionary Fellowship

a. Purposes

1. To provide opportunity for a spiritual fellowship of the mission personnel in Word and prayer.
2. To share one with another the joys, victories, problems and difficulties of their assignment.
3. To counsel together in matters related to the position and responsibility of their assignment.

The Missionary Fellowship is not a legislative body which determines principles and policies affecting the national church, neither does it rule on questions and needs arising within the national church.⁷⁴

An Administrative Committee was created to replace the Missionary Council. Its duties are listed in the 1963 handbook.

The Mission Administrative Committee

a. Membership

The Mission Administrative Committee on the field shall consist of the chairman, secretary (who is also assistant chairman) and the treasurer of the Missionary Fellowship elected according to specifications under *The Missionary Fellowship Organization*, pages 14 and 15.

b. Duties

1. It shall be the duty of the Mission Administrative Committee to carry on the general mission administration of the field in line with Board of Missions policies in close contact with the home Administrative Secretariat.

2. The Mission Administrative Committee represents the Board of Missions in its relations and cooperative program with the governing body of the Mennonite Brethren Church of the respective country in which it is located.

3. The Mission Administrative Committee shall bear the responsibility of watching over the spiritual lives of the various mission workers and look after their welfare in relationships, concerns and problems. It shall further be the duty of this Committee to counsel with, advise, guide as well as admonish staff members and also counsel with the home Board through the Administrative Secretariat regarding the spiritual welfare and status of the staff as a whole.

4. The Mission Administrative Committee, through its chairman, serves as the immediate representative of the home administration, with which it is to keep in constant touch regarding principles and policies to be pursued on the mission field, to implement Board resolutions, and to keep the home administration informed concerning current activities and developments as well as of spiritual and material needs for the field and to study long-term policies and field principles.

5. To keep the missionaries on the field informed as to the policies and plans of the Board and to be informed on the needs of the work on the field in general.

6. All matters related strictly to mission affairs are handled by the Mission Administrative Committee.

7. New and returning missionaries, upon arrival upon the field, who have not been specifically assigned by the home Board, will receive assignment by the Administrative Committee in keeping with principles of procedure as outlined under *The Assigning of Missionaries*, page 29.

8. The Mission Administrative Committee may appoint other committees necessary to carry out the program and assignment committed to them.⁷⁵

The enlarged handbook of 1959, incidentally, sets out specific goals and principles of operation; it regulates procedures, standards, lines of administration, positions to be strengthened and relationships to be built. It is a comprehensive and intelligent guide of instructions; though whether all the detailed and minute "guidance" given in the handbooks generally was necessary is debatable — after all, missionaries were members of the brotherhood and responsible men and women before God.

After 1966 a gradual, nonlegislative restructuring set in, based upon the principle of negotiation.⁷⁶

The 1971 and 1973 editions of the handbook, known as the *Manual of Operation*, regulate the details of the life, care, and ministries of missionaries and their families, as well as their furloughs, withdrawal and retirement. It can be said to the credit of the Mennonite Brethren that they do take care of their missionaries, financially and otherwise, in an honorable manner.

Christian Service personnel serve according to specific arrangements. A policy was first published by the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations in 1963 as "Guiding Principles and Policies." An enlarged, revised edition was printed in 1975 as "Christian Service Policy Handbook," published by the Board of Missions and Services. The merger document of the conference provided that the spiritual qualification of Christian Service personnel is to measure up to the qualifications of missionaries and other conference ministers. Ethically, there is to be no double standard in a Christian brotherhood.⁷⁷

In review, it may be said that the Lord has blessed Mennonite Brethren churches with a fair number of missionaries, as the table in the appendix shows (see table p.252),⁷⁸ and that most missionaries have nobly served the Lord. Yet it has not been easy for either Board or missionaries to lift themselves out of the colonial mentality in which mission found its inception, and transplant themselves into the new world of the second half of the 20th century. Colonialism, mission-centeredness and paternalism had formed a solid union, and only with difficulty could transitions be made. However, that there have been no serious disruptions on any field is a credit

to those who laid the foundations of the work, as well as to the energetic leadership given by the Board. Correspondence indicates serious tensions, but disruptions were avoided, less by legislation than by negotiations within the brotherhood.⁷⁹

Mission management: Finances

A separate treasury for foreign missions was created in 1885. From the beginning this treasury has consisted of two main divisions: the general treasury, or fund, gathered by the churches and designated by the conference for such purposes as it deemed advisable; and the assigned gifts treasury consisting of funds forwarded by the treasurer according to a donor's wishes.⁸⁰

The general treasury

The funds of the general treasury have experienced constant growth, except during some depression years (see table, p. 251). Even in those years it was possible to maintain all work for which the conference had assumed responsibility. In fact, in 1936 the conference assumed responsibility for two Baptist mission stations in India which the Baptists found difficult to sustain.⁸¹

Income for this treasury, as specified in the constitution, comes from mission offerings in churches, Sunday schools, young people's organizations, and other organizations in the churches; mission offerings at harvest and mission festivals; contributions given by individuals as expressions of gratitude to the Lord, memorial monies and wills, interest from the mission endowment fund, and rent from mission farms and other willed properties. Significant contributions come from women's mission circles in the local churches, and from annual mission sales in some churches. All gifts designated in general terms for mission flow into this treasury.

These funds are used for the general upkeep and advancement of missions. Properties and building are acquired, and the allowances and travel of missionaries paid. This treasury also defrays all the overhead of the mission enterprise. It is the most important treasury of the mission. To fail in this fund is to fail the mission economically, since out of this treasury mis-

sionary allowances and operating expenses at home and in foreign countries are paid.

The special or assigned gifts treasury

The Assigned Gifts Treasury was created quite early, since individuals and churches wanted to designate certain funds more specifically. About this treasury the 1936 constitution declares:

All gifts that are designated for a certain field or some specific purpose are remitted according to the wishes of the donors. However, if for some unavoidable reason they cannot be sent to the designated field, it is to be reported to the donors so that they can reassign them to other mission purposes. If no specific designation is then given, these gifts flow into the regular mission treasury.

This seems a fair arrangement, and no difficulties are registered in the mission office.⁸²

The advisability of such a treasury, however, has been seriously discussed in Mennonite Brethren churches (not without good reason, as the chart indicates).⁸³ The author is aware that idealists maintain that the Christian's giving should be unto the Lord and without any strings attached. This may seem like a good principle. However, it is not realistic. Not all people develop such spiritual maturity that they are governed by such ideal principles. They believe themselves not only stewards in giving, but also in the distribution and usage of the funds. Thus they may be giving unto the Lord by giving to specific people, causes or fields. A second problem is that a closely integrated treasury and a unified budget do not allow for specific leading of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and may take the personal and conscious purpose out of giving.⁸⁴ The Assigned Gifts Treasury is in fact a fair thermometer of the confidence of the constituency in the administration of the general treasury. The less confidence there is in the administration of the main treasury, the more money seems to flow into the assigned gifts treasury, or into outside projects.⁸⁵ The author's opinion is that the Assigned Gifts Treasury needs to be recognized more fully.

The pension treasury

As early as 1927 at the Henderson conference, the Board suggested the creation of a separate treasury out of which allowances could be paid to disabled, retired or widowed missionaries. Definite action was taken at the conference in Reedley, California, in 1936, when a special commission of nine men was nominated to assist the Board in preparing a plan to care for retiring and widowed missionaries.⁸⁶

Various attempts were made to build a fund for this purpose, including special offerings and also monthly offerings from Sunday schools in the amount of at least five cents per member enrolled.⁸⁷ It was a noble initial effort and became the nucleus from which the pension treasury developed. The plan became inadequate, however, as more missionaries reached retirement age. The Sunday school levy was discontinued, and retirement allowances are now paid out of the general treasury to supplement Social Security and old-age allowances. The mission treasury pays the Social Security tax for missionaries.⁸⁸

The endowment fund

The Mennonite Brethren Church of North America obtained its first charter on November 20, 1900.⁸⁹ The application for the charter required a statement of the financial resources of the organization. This led to the idea of establishing an endowment fund for foreign missions. After careful consideration they set their goal at \$50,000 — a large sum for a people still struggling hard for their livelihood.⁹⁰

The endowment fund is built up from four principal sources: cash contributions, interest-bearing cash promises paid over a period of years, willed property of friends, and sale of conference property such as church buildings.

The basic principle of the endowment fund is defined by the constitution in the following terms:

The interest derived from the mission endowment fund, as well as direct income, flow into the mission treasury and is to be used in foreign mission work. The principal must not be used. Only in exceptional cases of extreme need may a loan be made to the mission treasury in accordance with the following specifications:

(a) The Board of Trustees is instructed to invest ten percent of the fund consisting of cash in such values as can be reconverted into cash even in times of depression. If needs arise, the Board of Foreign Missions directs a petition to the Board of Trustees asking for a definite amount out of the endowment fund. If after due investigation the latter board also recognizes that conditions are such that the step is warranted, the amount called for may be supplied.

(b) The mission treasury is not required to pay interest on such loans from the endowment fund. But as soon as better times return, the amount that was loaned must again be paid back into the endowment fund. This may be done by making provision in the budget to reserve definite portions of the regular receipts for this purpose.⁹¹

The mission endowment fund has benefited both the mission cause and the home churches. It has, for example, definitely increased the stability of the mission treasury. Annual contributions are subject to considerable fluctuation, though the churches have shown tremendous loyalty and steadiness in support. However, during the Depression years the cash income fell short of the required budget, and for several years the Board was compelled to resort to the endowment fund treasury. In later years the mission treasury has repeatedly borrowed from the fund, especially during the summer months when donations are at a low ebb. The fund also helped finance the emergency evacuation project in Zaire in 1962.

On the other hand, the endowment fund has served local churches and district conferences by making possible loans for the construction of church buildings and schools. Improvements projected by the Board of Trustees have been consistently approved by the conference because of this availability of funds.⁹² The fund has now passed the one million dollar mark and is still increasing.

The nurture of mission interest

Mission interest, once awakened, does not maintain itself. Constant attention must be focused on preserving the *glow* and *go* of mission. The Mennonite Brethren churches have nurtured this interest with fair success.

Initially the mission motivation, interest and vision in

North America were kept alive principally by numerous articles in the *Zionsbote*. The researcher will be overwhelmed by the amount of missions material in the pages of this periodical years before the conference had its own missionaries. In the 1890s the *Zionsbote* began to print reports by Mennonite Brethren from Russia who served in India, by U.S. members serving in Africa with the German Baptist Society of Berlin, as well as reports from Indiana, Oklahoma, the first mission endeavor of the Mennonite Brethren churches of the United States.⁹³ The reports are extensive and detailed. The suffering and deaths of the early missionaries in Africa are portrayed vividly, as well as the circumstances under which they served. By the mid-1890s India was coming more and more to the fore. When Mennonite Brethren missionaries from America went to India, reports *Aus Indien* (from India) became almost a regular feature. The *Zionsbote* and *Mennonitische Rundschau* have been of far greater significance than is often realized.

Mission interest was further intensified by the *Hauptversammlungen* (regional meetings of clusters of churches), which often stretched over a two or three-day weekend. Sunday meetings were devoted mainly to mission challenges by ministers or visiting missionaries. The climax was a love offering for missions.⁹⁴ It is evident from *Zionsbote* reports that these festivities were often joint meetings with the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, and that speakers were exchanged freely with this sister church. The gatherings drew large audiences, and the celebrations were greatly used of the Lord to stimulate the constituency.

When N.N. Hiebert became secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions in 1902, he initiated a new promotional thrust: he travelled almost constantly, preaching and reporting to the constituency his own findings on missions. He served in this capacity for 34 years — 1902 to 1936. His impact upon the Mennonite Brethren constituency for mission is really immeasurable.⁹⁵ Later other secretaries did the same thing, though in a more limited degree. They also developed missionary conferences in the churches, where Bible messages on missions were combined with reports by missionaries.

Special credit for the nurture of missions interest must be

given to the women's missionary societies in the local churches. Each month women gathered to pray for missions and to prepare useful items, which were then sold in church auctions and the proceeds donated to missions. Though the auctions have been dropped in most churches, the monthly meetings continue.

It is difficult to measure the level of intensity of missions concern; there were differences in various congregations, depending on the mindset of the leadership, and in individual members. Not everyone experienced the same sense of urgency. Yet there clearly was considerable excitement in the constituency, which challenged the Board of Foreign Missions to move forward. In fact, on numerous occasions missions interest in the constituency outran the vision of the Board and resulted in independent projects, support for outside agencies, or pressure on the Board to open new fields. This was true of the work in China, Zaire, and Colombia.⁹⁶

Discussion questions for Chapter 4

1. Some argue that the authority to direct the mission work on the field should be in the hands of the missionaries who carry on the work. Others say it should be in a central board that has a broad view of the mission task. Discuss the pros and cons for each of these approaches, and note the oscillations in Mennonite Brethren mission policy on the matter. How does this relate to the relationship between the Board of Missions and Services and the national churches that are planned? What should be the distribution of authority between the mission board, the missionaries and the national churches?

2. In an attempt to strengthen personal involvement in missions, many boards have allowed designated gifts to be given directly to missionaries. Discuss the benefits and weaknesses of this approach, versus contributing to a general mission budget.

3. In what ways is the missionary task different from other church ministries and what types of special training (in addition to biblical studies) should missionary candidates receive?

4. How can interest in missions be raised and maintained

in a church or conference over a long period of time? Is this the responsibility of missionaries, of mission agencies or of church leaders? What are some of the forces that compete with or undermine that interest?

5

MISSION FIELD: THE WORLD

We turn now to a chronicle of Mennonite Brethren world missions as seen from the viewpoint of the Board in North America. A more comprehensive story of the many fields can be found in other books: *The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America* by J.J. Toews, *The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire* by J.B. Toews; *Shadowed by the Great Wall* by A.K. and Gertrude Wiens (all published by the General Conference Board of Christian Literature); and *8 Tulpengasse* by Margaret Epp (published by Christian Press).

Missions in North America

Evangelism in Mennonite settlements

When the Mennonites of Russia came to North America in the last three decades of the 19th century, they settled according to family relationships and available land rather than by churches. Mennonite Brethren families were therefore scattered over many states, often in sufficient numbers to organize churches. Very early these newly organized churches formed a conference and began vigorous evangelism within their settlements.¹ Annual evangelistic campaigns, for example, became a general pattern in the churches.

Somewhat later Mennonite Brethren penetrated the closed Mennonite communities in Canada: the Old Colony and Sommerfelder Mennonites. Some witnessed under great difficulties, but with surprising success, in the villages in Manitoba. As a result, several churches were born.² Later, the work of C.N. Hiebert created no little stir in the Mennonite villages of northern Saskatchewan.³ The Western Children's Mission, based in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, also reached into

numerous homes and villages of this province.

It must be mentioned that several churches in North Dakota are only in part transplants from former Mennonite Brethren churches. Many original church families were the product of aggressive evangelism in substantially non-Mennonite German communities.⁴

Special recognition must be given to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren churches of Kansas for their work in South and North Dakota among people who were of Anabaptist-Mennonite background but who experientially knew little of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The resulting churches now belong to the Mennonite Brethren conference.⁵

Missions to minority people

Several Mennonite Brethren devoted considerable time and energy to the evangelism of newly established Russian settlements in North Dakota and Saskatchewan. Russian-speaking churches grew up in Petrofka (later Blaine Lake) and Eagle Creek in Saskatchewan, and Kief, North Dakota.⁶ Unfortunately, the churches never really prospered.

In 1937 the Southern District Conference opened an extensive mission project among Spanish-speaking Americans in and around Mission, Texas. The Latin America Mennonite Brethren Conference resulted from these efforts along the Mexican border.⁷ Considerable work has also been done among the Spanish-speaking Americans in the Fresno-Reedley, California, area.⁸

Within the last two decades the Canadian Conference has developed a work among the French Canadians in Quebec. At the moment the work is most encouraging. Several churches have been organized and a Bible school has been opened.⁹

The Krimmer churches distinguished themselves in their mission work to the black communities in North Carolina. Six small black evangelical churches have resulted from this effort.¹⁰

The earliest project conducted by the Board of Missions was a mission to the Comanche Indians of Indiahoma, Oklahoma. For more than half a century the work was carried on without interruption.¹¹ Proportionately no single project has demanded more energy, time, money, prayer and people

than this work, from which eventually a church emerged.

In recent decades the Central District Conference has conducted a mission on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation of South Dakota. The results have been meager and discouraging.¹² Somehow Christian missions have not been able to penetrate the Indian reservations. The search for social relatedness and spiritual relevance must continue if the reservations are to be evangelized.

Mission to rural people in Canada

For some years a dynamic movement radiated from the Bethany Bible Institute of Hepburn, Saskatchewan: the Western Children's Mission. A ministry by unpaid volunteers, young people of the Mennonite Brethren churches, stretched over the western provinces of Canada, reaching thousands of spiritually destitute people in rural areas with the gospel by means of vacation Bible schools, home-to-home visitation, literature distribution, and services wherever possible. The work was well supported by Mennonite Brethren constituents.¹³ Several churches in British Columbia and others in Ontario also resulted from rural mission efforts.¹⁴

Christian Service

Since the mid-1960s a large number of Mennonite Brethren young people have volunteered for some type of Christian service to society. To coordinate such a service, a Christian Service program sponsored by the Board of Missions and Services provided two-year assignments at home and abroad. Hundreds of young people freely enlisted and greatly supplemented the efforts of missionaries. In 1981 fourteen people were in such assignments.¹⁵

Mission to city people

Not least in importance were the city missions begun in Minneapolis, Winnipeg, Chicago (KMB), Los Angeles, and Vancouver. Some of these operated on the level of rescue missions, but others became churches and are continuing their outreach.¹⁶ Much of the city work is now done by provinces, districts or local churches through home missions and church

extension boards. In the 1970s and early 1980s particularly, there has been an increased enthusiasm for urban church planting at the district/provincial level. Mennonite Brethren now are beginning to make inroads into some of the largest urban centers in the U.S. and Canada, focusing (for better or worse) on largely suburban, middle-class target areas.

The recounting of these outreach efforts creates ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, it elicits thanks to God and the churches for providing such examples. We must keep in mind that much of the early outreach was done when our constituency was poor; yet, motivated by the spiritual needs around them, many sacrificed heavily in time and money to make outreach possible.

On the other hand, the study is depressing. The number of established churches is comparatively meager. While Mennonite Brethren churches have been energetic in evangelism and aggressive in pioneer ministries, they have not been successful in retaining converts and building churches. As a result the converts either joined non-Mennonite churches or remain as scattered, small groups among Russian, Spanish, American Indian and black people.

With this overview of home missions we turn our attention to the larger foreign missions activities.

Small beginnings in foreign missions

The foreign missions interest was brought from Russia to America. Already in 1879 this interest expressed itself in the first conference deliberations.¹⁷ In 1881 one-half of the conference love-offering of \$26.36 was designated for foreign missions. The 1882 conference resolved to send the foreign mission offering of \$50.13 to the Baptist Mission in east India. In 1883 one-third of the conference love-offering (\$40.77) was assigned to foreign missions. At the same conference, further positive action was taken. In May, 1883, G.D. Thomssen, American Baptist missionary in Madras, had published an article in the *Sendbote* in which he referred to several smaller associations which were supporting national workers. He mentioned the liberality of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, and in order to cultivate their interest suggested that Mennonite Brethren might undertake the support

of a Telugu evangelist for \$100 annually.¹⁹ The article was read at the conference and caused enthusiastic response. Several people suggested the conference accept responsibility for two national evangelists. When the conference voted to underwrite only one, a group volunteered to support a second worker. The needed finances were raised without difficulty.²⁰

The report of Thomssen on the work of these nationals, Bodijudy Abraham and Darla Tiramalonah, was very encouraging. At the annual meeting (1885) the conference accepted the financial responsibility for both evangelists.²¹ Such support of national workers in India under Baptist supervision increased until the conference supported six nationals among the Telugus in 1894.²²

Africa, especially the Cameroons, also received early attention. The first designation to this field was \$100, which was increased to \$200 in 1889.²³

In the early 1890s the Baptists of Germany organized a work in the Cameroons, with August Steffens of America as pioneer. Since Steffens was known in the Mennonite Brethren circles, his departure for the field awakened an interest in the work in Africa. At its annual session in 1891 the conference decided to support national workers through Steffens.²⁴

Independence in foreign missions

The support of mission work through other societies did not satisfy the Mennonite Brethren Church. It is true there was a strong trend to associate all foreign missions activities with the Baptists — the American Baptist Missionary Union for work in India, and the German Baptist Missionary Society of Berlin for work in Africa.²⁵ There was also considerable interest in forming a united inter-Mennonite mission. In two sessions in 1895 representatives from the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, the Mennonite Brethren, J.A. Sprunger of the Light and Hope Mission Society and a Rev. Rayseyer of Elkton, Michigan, met to discuss such possibilities.²⁶ They took no concrete action. The general tendency toward separate Mennonite Brethren work was too strong among church leaders to yield to associated organizations.

As early as 1886 at the conference in South Dakota, the North American Indians were mentioned as a possible in-

dependent mission field.²⁷ At the next session, participants were encouraged by a report that John Baerg of Kansas was preparing at the Rochester Baptist Seminary and was willing to be considered as a candidate for such mission work. Rejoicing over such prospects, the conference resolved to help him with \$150 to defray his seminary expenses.²⁸

With the prospect of soon having its own missionary, the conference in 1889 appointed a committee of three to locate a suitable mission field. An extensive tour was made through Arizona and New Mexico to study the mission situation. John Baerg, meanwhile, became ill. When the conference convened at Lehigh, Kansas, in 1892, matters seemed at a standstill. The next year Baerg was compelled to ask for release from his appointment, and all plans seemed to be shattered.²⁹

By the time the 1894 conference convened, the Lord had a young couple ready. The Heinrich Kohfelds were accepted as missionaries, and \$150 was appropriated for a trial work among the Comanche Indians in Oklahoma.³⁰ With the appointment of the Kohfelds and the selection of a field, the first definite move towards an independent mission work had been made. The struggle for an independent *foreign* missions enterprise now seriously intensified.

The crisis conference of 1896

The Mennonite Brethren Church suffered from two very serious handicaps. First, they had no school of their own to train their young men as ministers, missionaries, and educators. Most of their men preparing for ministry were studying in the Rochester German Baptist Theological Seminary. Here they absorbed sufficient Baptist influence to feel at one with the Baptists. The distinctive features of the Mennonite Brethren having been minimized, these students saw little reason for independence in mission activities.

Second, the Mennonite Brethren at this early stage had neither an efficient organization nor definite plans for mission work. They lacked leadership in mission. The young people, left without sufficient guidance, turned to the German Baptist Missionary Society of Berlin and not to their own church.

The first young Mennonite Brethren to apply to the German Baptist was Peter Wedel. He had traveled widely among

the Mennonite Brethren as an evangelist and when he went to the Cameroons, Africa, in 1895 under the Berlin society, most of his support came from his Mennonite Brethren friends.³¹

Following his example were the H.E. Ennses of Minnesota, who likewise went to the Cameroons under the Baptist Mission of Berlin. Before leaving, Enns gave a personal testimony at the Mennonite Brethren conference at Ebenfeld, Kansas, and related the circumstances of his decision to go to Africa. The conference, regretting the loss of such promising workers, passed a resolution to help support the Wedels and Ennses, adding to the resolution that should any of them decide to return to the conference and open an independent work for the Mennonite Brethren, such a move would be greatly appreciated.³²

This conference is significant in that it marked the turning point in the struggle for independence in a mission enterprise, and the question of association never again became a serious one. History has justified the strong desire for an independent mission. While early association with the Baptists fanned the Mennonite Brethren interest in missions and taught a missiology, the separation is justified for two reasons. First, had the Mennonite Brethren remained associated with the Baptists in foreign missions, the drift toward association in other aspects would no doubt have been strengthened until the very existence of the Mennonite Brethren Church could have been threatened; at the least, the Baptists would have dominated foreign missions, the Mennonite Brethren remaining merely contributors. Second, because of the struggle for independence, measures had to be taken to establish a vigorous church organization and to spiritually revitalize the whole movement to become a truly independent denomination. A church paper, *Der Zionsbote*, came into being in 1884, and preparations were undertaken for a Mennonite Brethren educational institution.³³

Foreign mission fields

India. The first foreign mission field of the Mennonite Brethren Church was India.³⁴ It may seem peculiar that it should be India and not Cameroons, Africa, since the first members from the conference had gone to Africa. However,

several factors clearly favored India over Africa:

(1) The early deaths of three of the four missionaries in the Cameroons, two of them very suddenly.³⁵ The impact of their passing on the home churches can be measured by the numerous reports that appeared in the *Zionsbote* in 1897 and 1898. These articles are also a window on the struggle going on in the conference over an Africa versus India mission, and over mission work in association with other societies versus an independent work.

(2) The work of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia in India. Abram Friesen was doing a thriving work among the Telegus at Nalgonda, and his reports in the *Zionsbote* stimulated a great deal of interest in India. The very first contribution toward the Nalgonda work came from churches in America. Later they supported several national workers.³⁶ Since Friesen was faithful in reporting the progress of the work, the relationship became important at a time when the conference had to choose a mission field.

(3) The great Telugu revival on the American Baptist Mission field. In 1878-1881 and again in 1890, multitudes turned from paganism to the Christian faith. The Ongola church, for example, grew from 2,400 members to 20,865; a few years later 4,000 more believers were baptized by this church. Assisted by several national ministers, J.E. Cough baptized 2,222 converts in one day; he saw his church grow from several hundred to over 9,000 members in one year.³⁷ Reports of this revival greatly impressed the Mennonite Brethren.

Thus it is not surprising that India, not Africa, claimed the attention of the conference. At the annual session at Bingham Lake, Minnesota, in 1897, the conference gave the Board authority to find a young couple prepared to go to India to open a mission.³⁸

Armed with this mandate, the Board set out to find pioneer missionaries. Their choice finally fell upon N.N. Hiebert of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. He was not yet married, but it was expected that he would marry before proceeding to India.⁴⁸

The choice was not made lightly, as we have already noted. It was preceded by a day of prayer and preaching. Not only brother Hiebert, but the local church and the entire brother-

hood sought God's will in the matter. The author is impressed by the seriousness with which the early leaders viewed the calling of a missionary. There was a search for unity in the appointment of a missionary; it was more than a Board action, it was a brotherhood moving in obedience to the Lord. There was dependence on prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and orientation to the Word of God. They were fully conscious that it was God who was using people and the church as his instruments.

In 1899 the Hieberts and Elizabeth Neufeld accompanied Abram Friesen to India, travelling via Russia.³⁹ Here they were soon joined by Anna Suderman, a Mennonite Brethren missionary supported by an independent group.⁴⁰

Hardly a year had passed when the news reached the Board that N.N. Hiebert was seriously ill. Before long he was obliged to leave India and return home, having served eighteen months.⁴¹ At the conference in 1901, Hiebert pled for continuation of the work in India. Though the atmosphere was somewhat depressing, the conference refused to be discouraged. The Board reported that J.H. Pankratz and D.F. Berghold had already been contacted for work in India.⁴² This report lifted the cloud and brought new courage to the brotherhood. (For the testimony of J.H. Pankratz at this conference, see *Appendix B.7, p. 226*).

After the Pankratzes left for India in 1902 and the Bergholds in 1904, there was a continuing flow of missionaries from the Mennonite Brethren Church.⁴³ Though the field would at times have favored a larger staff, it cannot be said that India has ever been seriously understaffed, with the exception of some years when missionary families thought it advisable to leave India because of the threat of war, and reinforcements could not be sent. The conference has held pace quite well with openings in the field.

A conference of 25,000 members has come into being in India, organized into nine Field Associations, one General Convention for spiritual ministries, and a Governing Council⁴⁴ (See *Appendix B.8, p. 227* for constitution of A.M.B. Conference, India, see *Appendix B.9* for a draft of a proposed constitution of the Andhra MB Church and the American MB Mission).

In 1970 the Board decided to negotiate with the India

Mennonite Brethren Church for the withdrawal of all mission personnel within two or three years.⁴⁵ It was considered wise to give the national church opportunity to define its own identity without the influence of missionaries — true indigeneity is best achieved as national churches wrestle with issues themselves. Another factor dictating withdrawal was the need to demonstrate to the non-Christian population of India that Christianity is a reality not dependent on a missionary force. A final factor was that the Lord had raised up a core of nationals capable of leading the churches. These men needed to prove themselves among their own people.⁴⁶

By the end of 1973 all Mennonite Brethren missionaries had been removed from their field assignments. Several later returned for special assignments at the request of the India church.⁴⁷

The Mennonite Brethren Church of India is an historical reality. It is comprised of a community of some 50,000 adherents and an adult baptized membership of over 25,000. It consists of 116 organized churches, and about 600 smaller groups. Christian representation is found in some 200 villages, several larger towns, and the two large cities, Mahbubnagar and Hyderabad. Legislatively and administratively, the church is autonomous. All local churches are self-supporting, though a few general conference institutions are subsidized by the Board in North America.⁴⁸

The Mennonite Brethren Church of India has voted itself into a proposed world fellowship of the Mennonite Brethren brotherhood and considers itself a part of the total Anabaptist-Mennonite movement.⁴⁹

China. The first direct contact with China came through agents of the China Mennonite Mission founded by the H.C. Bartels, who had gone to China in 1901.⁵⁰ In 1906 Bartel returned to America seeking support for his work. Though a member of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church, Bartel was invited to many Mennonite Brethren churches, for he had many friends and relatives there. He stimulated interest in mission work in China. As a result, several Mennonite Brethren workers went to serve on the Bartel field.⁵¹

The conference as a body, however, took no part in the newly created field, and remained somewhat reserved in its attitude.

The first conference discussion on a possible mission in China comes from the report of the 1909 annual conference at Henderson. There the F.J. Wienses requested that they be sent to China as Mennonite Brethren missionaries. The atmosphere became rather tense when the question was raised whether the conference was prepared to open a new mission station in China. Fear was expressed that such action might negatively influence the work in India, which soon would require more workers and finances. The delegates differed strongly and emotions ran high. Clearly the Board of Missions did not favor the move. After a lengthy discussion the following resolution was adopted:

The Conference authorizes the Board of Foreign Missions to undertake the necessary steps, and if such work finds general approval, to open a field in China with Brother and Sister F.J. Wiens as missionaries.⁵²

The indefiniteness of the resolution is evident. The phrase "if such work finds general approval" was interpreted by the Board to mean that all local churches were to be consulted. Thus the Board prepared a letter to the churches, requesting them to express approval or disapproval. The churches were no more definite on the resolution and left the decision to the Board, with the exception of two churches which were definitely in favor of opening the work.⁵³

The choice of a field was even more complicated. The conference was not acquainted with China. Most of its information had come from Bartel, so that the Board and conference had been thinking in terms of Bartel's field in northern China. Yet F.J. Wiens had a new field in South China in mind. Not being able to come to a clear understanding, and not having definite word from the churches, the Board felt under obligation to wait for definite action by the General Conference scheduled for October, 1912.⁵⁴

The Wienses found themselves in a peculiar situation: they must either wait three years or go out as independent missionaries. They chose the latter course. Instead of going directly to China, they went via Russia, where they visited Mennonite Brethren churches, did evangelistic work in various communities, and gathered extensive sums of money. They

finally travelled by way of Siberia, Japan and the China coast to Shong Hong, Fukien, where they opened a field in early 1912. Here they served among the Hakkas very successfully as independent missionaries for a number of years.⁵⁵

The independent action of the Wienses had not solved the problem of mission work in China. It had indeed complicated matters severely. The Mennonite Brethren Conference now had members serving in North China with the China Mission, and the Wienses in the south in Fukien. Both fields depended at least partly for support on the Mennonite Brethren, and both expected to be received eventually as conference missionaries.⁵⁶

Several difficulties seemed to stand in the way of adopting the work in Fukien. It was feared that opening a new field would divide the limited resources of people and money to such an extent that both the India and China fields would suffer. Further, it was mentioned that acceptance of a China mission would set a precedent and result in more requests, since other members of the Mennonite Brethren Conference had opened independent mission fields.⁵⁷ The first fear was completely unfounded and betrays nearsightedness, though the second was justified, at least in part. It seems to the author that both problems could have been resolved by resolute leadership on the part of the Board.

Delegates to the 1915 conference differed widely in opinion. A compromise resolution was therefore adopted: An annual gift of \$500 was to be sent to the Wienses; at the same time the Board was instructed to take preparatory steps to accept the South China field at the next conference.⁵⁸

At the 1919 conference the delegates moved to solve the "China-Wiens problem." The Board had prepared for action. To make sure of its steps, it had instructed J.H. Pankratz, senior missionary to India, to visit the South China mission station, study the situation, and make recommendations. When Pankratz warmly recommended the mission as well as the missionaries, the delegates approved a resolution to accept the South China mission as a conference field, with the Wienses as its missionaries.⁵⁹ The matter was finally settled after almost ten years of discussion.

The conference immediately took steps to strengthen the

staff on the field. Six more missionaries were approved to go to China within a year.⁶⁰

Mission work in China did not progress as undisturbed as in India. The Hakka field experienced serious disruptions because of revolutionary activity. Between 1927 and 1929 all stations and residences were destroyed by communist bandits. The missionaries dispersed: some sought safety in Swatow, others went to the Bartel field in North China, and some went to America. In the 1940s several missionaries returned briefly, but by 1951 all had been forced to leave.⁶¹ Since then no information from the Mennonite Brethren churches among the Hakkas has been available.

Three additional fields in China must be mentioned. The H.C. Bartels had gone to China in 1901 with the South Chihli Mission. In 1905 they broke off their relationship with this mission and went north to open an independent work in Shantung and Honan provinces. Their goal was to establish an inter-Mennonite mission in China. They succeeded only as far as workers were concerned, though an organization known as China Mennonite Mission Society gathered some funds for the work. No genuine inter-Mennonite organization ever undergirded the work, even though missionaries came from the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, the Mennonite Brethren, and the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.⁶²

Because several Mennonite Brethren were involved in the work and because no other Mennonite body was willing to accept responsibility for the mission, appeals were made to the Mennonite Brethren Board.⁶³ Yet not until 1945 at the General Conference in Dinuba, California, was the Board authorized to negotiate with the China Mennonite Mission Society for the transfer of the mission to the Mennonite Brethren Church.⁶⁴ Though the transaction was agreed upon at home in 1947, a group of missionaries from non-Mennonite background objected so strongly that the merger could not be completed.⁶⁵

By then field circumstances were changing rapidly. Because of communist threats, the missionaries, including the Bartels, had gone west and opened a new field in Kansu and Shensi provinces, over 1,000 miles northwest of the South China field. In 1948 the conference ratified the support of this field as well.⁶⁶ Yet the ministry in western China was short-

lived. Communism swept in and soon conquered all of China. Missionaries were evacuated. By July, 1951, all missionaries had been removed.⁶⁷ Most had returned to America, except Loyal Bartel, who preferred to share the lot of the Chinese church and remained in the Shantung-Honan field. Here he died in the late 1960s (the last reports came through in 1967).⁶⁸

The merger of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Brethren makes it necessary to mention the Inner Mongolia mission. Several Krimmer missionaries had served there for many years, with encouraging results. Because the work terminated before 1960 it never came under the administration of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions.⁶⁹

Africa. Africa became the focus of much mission interest toward the end of the 19th century. When stations were opened in Oklahoma, India, and China, however, Africa was pushed into the background until it was again put on the conference agenda in 1919 at Mountain Lake, Minnesota.⁷⁰

The Aaron Janzens of Mountain Lake had gone to Africa in 1911 under the Congo Inland Mission and served in the Kasai district.⁷¹ During their furlough in 1919 they expressed the desire to open a work in Africa and be accepted as Mennonite Brethren Conference missionaries. They expressed this request by letter because they would be returning before the General Conference would meet.⁷² Upon their return to Africa, the Janzens requested release from their Congo Inland Mission assignment in order to pioneer a new field, which they hoped would be recognized by the Mennonite Brethren. In 1922 the Janzens began ministry at Kafumba.⁷³

The delegates to the 1919 conference felt that the Janzens' letter presented an unexpected request which could not be answered definitely before local congregations were consulted. The following resolution was passed: "Should the Lord so lead, open the way and give funds, the Conference shall consider the possibilities of opening work in Africa at its next session."⁷⁴ The seriousness of the conference's expressed intention is open to question when we find that, contrary to the resolution, the Africa request was not even mentioned at sessions in 1921 and 1924. It somehow became buried with the Board of Missions. Deliberation about the Africa work resumed only in 1927, when the Janzens personally represented their work.⁷⁵

The Board now appears to have had a more favorable attitude toward the mission in the Congo. Plans were prepared for opening a work on a larger scale with conference support. The Board proposed that (a) if possible, the conference should accept the field and its workers; (b) if that were not acceptable, the Board should be authorized to support the work with a definite sum of money; and (c) in any case, the conference should take a favorable attitude and permit workers to visit the Mennonite Brethren churches in the interest of Africa and receive freewill offerings.⁷⁶

The conference approved a resolution that the churches be consulted, prior to a definite conclusion at the next General Conference. Meanwhile, the Janzens were free to visit churches and receive aid.⁷⁷

With high hopes, the Janzens returned to Africa in 1928, accompanied by several recruits.⁷⁸ They were to be disappointed in their church once more. Perhaps the threatening Depression was responsible for the pessimism at the next conference, which convened in 1930 at Hepburn, Saskatchewan. Despite extensive discussion, the delegates were unable to reach consensus. Fear that the work on other fields would be affected seemed to dominate both delegates and Board. The following resolution was passed:

The Conference expressed its sympathy towards the brethren and sisters on the Africian field and is very willing to transmit any funds that come in for that work. But the Conference is under the impression that the time has not yet come to accept full responsibility for the station, its staff and work.⁷⁹

Though the conference postponed positive action, hoping perhaps that time would solve some problems for them, they soon realized this would not happen. Interest in an Africa mission increased and more missionaries went out, among them the Henry Bartsches of Dalmeny, Saskatchewan.

The Bartsches reached Kafumba in 1932.⁸⁰ A year later, because of tensions at the station, they responded to a challenge by a government official that some mission assist in evangelizing the Decese tribes, who were often in revolt against the government.⁸¹ The Bartsches thus founded an independent mission station at Bololo, some 600 miles from Kafumba.⁸²

Prior to becoming missionaries, the Bartsches had been students at the Peniel Bible School of Winkler, Manitoba. Accordingly several students met in June, 1932, with Gerhard Reimer, a Winkler Bible School teacher, to organize the *Afrika Missions Komitee* (Africa Mission Committee), later the *Afrika Missions Verein* (Africa Mission Society). In 1934 a directorate of five members was elected and the society enlarged.³⁸

A visit to North America by Bartsch in 1935 failed to elicit a satisfactory response from the Board, but stimulated so much interest that the *Verein* grew rapidly. In 1936 the mission was incorporated, independently of the conference, as an interdenominational society. It followed, however, the principles of the Mennonite Brethren Church.³⁹ This directorate functioned until 1943.⁴⁰

Thus, time had only multiplied problems and complicated the situation. At times the struggles between the Board and the Africa Mission Society were rather intense.⁴¹

The issue received attention at the General Conference in 1939, held in Corn, Oklahoma.⁴² The Board recommended that official acceptance of an Africa mission be postponed for at least another conference because (1) India activity was already limited because of low funds; (2) the world political situation was uncertain; and (3) there was lack of clarity in regard to certain issues on the Africa field. After much discussion on the conference floor, however, the conference voted in favor of mission work in Africa.⁴³ The brotherhood thus solved the principle question: Africa was to be included in Mennonite Brethren missions; details were to be worked out by committees.⁴⁴

Plans published in the *Zionsbote* by delegated committees provided for the acceptance of both fields, Kafumba and Bololo; unconditional supervision of the work by the Conference; and transfer of all property to the Conference. These proposals were later presented to the Conference.⁴⁵

For some undisclosed reason the Board had prepared an alternative plan, entitled "Principles for the Extension of Mission Work."⁴⁶ The plan is innovative and creative (the entire statement is printed in Appendix B.10, p. xxx). It provided for coordinated, but not subordinated, mission societies within

the brotherhood. The program has been successfully developed in the (Old) Mennonite Church. From the perspective of missions history, this document could have given Mennonite Brethren missions not only a new face but new directions, new dimensions and depth. While the plan had disadvantages, the benefits probably would have outweighed them.

The plan was published in the *Zionsbote*; but at the conference it was presented as a concession to human imperfection and therefore was not considered.⁹²

At the General Conference in Buhler, Kansas in 1943, therefore, only the April 5, 1940 proposals were seriously considered. First the Kafumba field and then the Bololo field were accepted as Mennonite Brethren projects.⁹³ Thus the long drawn-out process ended. The church had assumed full responsibility for two mission fields in Africa, adding ten more missionaries to its list.

The Conference immediately took steps to strengthen the staff and enlarge the work. World War 2 interfered with the immediate sending of new personnel; but the preparations continued, and they were sent soon after the war ended.⁹⁴

In retrospect, it is interesting to note that Africa, specifically Zaire, has received a large proportion of the Mennonite Brethren missions staff. Just prior to independence in 1960, more than sixty missionaries were assigned to a relatively small population, about 500,000 people. The expanded territory, poor communication and transportation, and the complexity of ministries seemingly demanded more and more workers. The work grew rapidly, with more stations steadily being erected. The response of the people to the gospel was good, and therefore the church expanded beyond expectations.

Drastic changes followed independence from Belgium, and the ensuing struggle resulted in tribal, territorial and political wars which devastated the country. All missionaries had to be evacuated, most mission property was destroyed, villages were pillaged, church buildings ruined, church leaders killed and the people scattered into the forests. It seemed as though the church had been obliterated.

Gradually the missionaries filtered back, established contacts, and, step by step, rebuilt the work. The ruined mission centers, however, have not been rebuilt. The work is now

church-centered, and the missionaries are operating from two main centers, Kajiji in the south and Kikwit to the north. The church is nationalized, and by government order the missionaries have been integrated into the structure of the church. Legally, the Mennonite Brethren mission no longer exists in Zaire.⁹⁵

Latin America. Latin America as a possible mission field for the Mennonite Brethren was mentioned for the first time at the 1943 conference in Buhler, Kansas.

The executive secretary, H.W. Lohrenz, had long been deeply interested in the people of the southern hemisphere. In fact, he was the driving force behind a mission project the Southern District Conference had begun in 1937 among the Latin people in South Texas.⁹⁶

The mission work of the Mennonites of Paraguay among the Lengua Indians of the Chaco had resulted in much correspondence between Lohrenz and the representatives of the Fernheim Mission Association in Paraguay, known as *Licht den Indianern* (Light to the Indians). Thus, friendly relations were established and considerable interest developed in the Indian mission. However, no official responsibilities were assumed at this time.⁹⁷

Another movement directing the attention of Lohrenz to South America was, surprisingly, the Western Children's Mission. Lohrenz commented:

The efforts of these workers among the poor and destitute in the northwest have given rise to another movement. Their horizon has widened steadily until it is extended to South America, our neighboring continent. As a result of this awakening some of our young people from Canada and certain sections of the United States are now serving under other societies in Colombia and Brazil. . . . Of all the large mission fields, none has been so neglected as South America. Very few are more promising.⁹⁸

In response, the 1943 conference adopted a brief but significant recommendation:

That we express our interest in mission work in South America and we recommend that the Conference enter upon such work if the Lord opens the way.⁹⁹

There were at least two reasons why Paraguay should not receive major attention: (1) the mission field in the Chaco was very limited, the Indian tribes being small and widely scattered; (2) a group of young people were strongly inclined to go to Colombia.¹⁰⁰

The Board therefore delegated G.W. Peters of Saskatchewan to undertake an investigative tour through some of the republics of the South to study the mission situation. After several months of comprehensive investigation in Colombia, Peters presented his findings to the Board in July, 1944.

The Board decided to open a field in Colombia, thinking particularly of the *Intendencia del Choco*, with its several large Negro settlements and Indian tribes. An initial team, all from Saskatchewan, were chosen to begin the work. Thus, Colombia became the first conference mission field in Latin America.¹⁰¹

Paraguay, however, was not forgotten. Financial assistance to the Fernheim Mission Association was continued for several years, and young people were encouraged to consider Paraguay as a possible mission field. Eventually financial and organizational difficulties in the Mennonite churches of Paraguay compelled the Fernheim Mission Association to turn to North America for help. Negotiations were completed in 1945, and Paraguay became the second Latin American mission field.¹⁰² The work of the Association was not abridged; on the contrary, it was to continue to furnish the larger percentage of workers, advice, and such other support as the Mennonite churches in Paraguay were able to give.¹⁰³

The work in Latin America expanded rapidly. In the years 1945 to 1965 Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and the Indians of Panama east of the Canal Zone were added to the list and are being ministered to. Some are receiving considerable service personnel while others have more limited and restricted opportunities.

It should be added that Peru was not directly entered by the Mennonite Brethren Church, but rather by the former Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference. When the latter conference merged with the Mennonite Brethren Church, the Board assumed responsibility for the Peru operations.

Another exception in Panama. Due to adverse circumstances the ministry to the Indians of the Choco, Colombia,

had to be discontinued during the years of violence in Colombia (1948-1958). Because the same people could be reached from Panama, the base of operation was shifted to that country. It thus became a mission not to a country but a people.

The work in Panama merits special mention also for the Board's avant garde and pioneering approach to outreach. Rather than being traditional "on-site" missionaries in the tribes and villages, Mennonite Brethren workers would teach and train selected tribal leaders at a central location. The tribal leaders would then return to their tribes and contextualize the message, making it relevant for their particular situations. This approach was quite unique in missionary circles — and not without debate by some.

The work is progressing in the various fields at a different pace. In general, however, it has not been growing proportionately to the potential of Latin America and as rapidly as several other missions and churches are progressing. For some time there came a dangerous leveling off in expansion and growth in some Republics. To some extent this is being remedied by an intensive program of evangelism in Brazil and Paraguay. Colombia, too, is regaining some of its former momentum.¹⁰⁴ The Board has lately advanced in strengthening the work in Uruguay and Mexico. Thus new impulses are making themselves felt.

Europe. The Mennonite Brethren ministry in Western Europe developed as the result of two unique circumstances. Numerous Mennonite Brethren refugees from South Russia remained in West Germany after World War 2. Many of these had been evacuated from the Ukraine by the German army and sent to Germany. Others had fled ahead of the retreating German army and the advancing communist forces. After the capitulation of Germany, these refugees were gathered into camps by the Allied Occupation Administration. Though many of these refugees were eventually resettled in Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina, others remained in Germany and today form the nucleus for at least two Mennonite Brethren churches in Germany.¹⁰⁵

A second ministry grew out of the relief efforts to the many war refugees and destitute people in West Germany and Austria. People who experienced the love of God through such

help expressed the desire to become Christians and join the Mennonite Brethren Church. Centers of evangelism were consequently established in Neuwied and Neustadt, West Germany, and in Linz, Austria. The work then expanded through a ministry of evangelism and Bible teaching.¹⁰⁶

Initially the work was administered by the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations.¹⁰⁷ In 1952 the Board of Foreign Missions assumed responsibility for various ministries and began to support workers.¹⁰⁸ In 1954 at the Hillsboro, Kansas, General Conference, a recommendation by the Board of Foreign Missions was approved that Europe become a field ministry for the Mennonite Brethren Church to be administered by the Board of Foreign Missions.¹⁰⁹ At present a Mennonite Brethren witness is present in several different places. Several of the larger churches are functioning well.¹¹⁰

Recently a new ministry has been added. Numerous German families have been returning from Russia to Germany, among them not a few Mennonite Brethren. At several places they have organized independent Mennonite Brethren churches, others have formed Baptist churches, while still others have joined existing Mennonite Brethren churches. Several North American Mennonite Brethren ministers are assisting in serving the scattered resettlers.¹¹¹

Japan. Japan was accepted as a mission field at the General Conference in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in 1948.¹¹² The following year the H.G. Thielmans of Kitchener, Ontario, went to Japan to open a relief project for the Mennonite Central Committee of Akron, Pennsylvania. Before the Thielmans sailed, the Board of Missions had agreed with the Mennonite Central Committee that the projected relief center was to be converted as soon as advisable into a mission and church center. It was also understood that a spiritual ministry to the Japanese was to be included in the relief work from the very beginning.¹¹³

After the Thielmans had carefully studied the situation, the board decided in November, 1950, that Osaka would be the most suitable center for mission operation. That same month a large residence was purchased in Ikeda City to serve as mission headquarters and residence for missionaries. Ikeda

City is a suburb of Osaka, some 14 miles north of downtown Osaka.

Once the mission outreach had a base more missionaries were sent. The total staff has never exceeded seven married couples and three single women, but a most encouraging and prosperous work has been established. Today a national conference, fully indigenous, is functioning effectively, and a fraternal partnership exists between church, mission and missionaries.¹¹⁴

Other works. The General Conference that convened in August, 1975, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, authorized the Board to open a new work in Spain and to send workers to Indonesia to assist in evangelism and church planting ministries. In the latter the work is to be done in conjunction with United Muria Christian Church of Indonesia. The conference also sanctioned the sending of fraternal workers to some independent African churches.¹¹⁵ A new field of ministry was opened in Madrid, Spain in 1976.

Thus the work has expanded beyond all expectation. It is remarkable what a small brotherhood can do when it lives in dedication to the cause of its Lord.

Discussion questions for Chapter 5

1. *The Mennonite Brethren churches have the responsibility to carry out evangelism and missions among the unreached who live abroad and those in our neighborhood who belong to our own and other cultural and ethnic groups. How can the work in all these areas be organized so that none is neglected and the different methods needed for each is recognized? Should they be organized under separate programs and boards or handled by a single office?*

2. *At the outset, Mennonite Brethren, both in Russia and in North America, worked together with the American Baptist Missionary Union in carrying on mission work. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using such inter-church cooperative mission efforts as against a program organized purely along denominational lines.*

3. *Does the responsibility for organizing mission work and calling missionaries rest with the local church, the conference*

of churches or individuals who feel led of God? How best can these three be fit into the overall task of organizing for mission outreach?

6

KRIMMER MENNONITE
BRETHREN MISSIONS

In 1960 the Mennonite Brethren Church and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church merged to form a united brotherhood.¹ (See Appendix B.11, p.236 for a summary of the merger as presented in Reedley, California, November 12, 1960 — the date of the official merger.) Our concern, however, is only with the Krimmer mission work, which touched more than a dozen countries and several cities in the United States — a vigorous program indeed for a conference which in 1960 consisted of twelve congregations and about 1,800 members.

The same factors which stimulated mission interest in the Mennonite communities during the 1830s to 1850s also had their impact upon those who later formed the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church. They had lived in the Molotschna colony during the revivals under pastor Eduard Wuest, and founded their church only nine years after the Mennonite Brethren.² Jacob A. Wiebe, leader of the movement, was an alert man, a man of discernment, conviction and action, as well as a man with a warm heart, deep human interests, and who was sensitive to the work of God, as his diaries reveal. No less so were his brothers, Heinrich and Peter.³

Official records for the pioneer years of the movement are meager. From the diaries of Elder Wiebe and Peter Barkman, it is evident that mission motivation was rooted in concepts similar to those of the Mennonite Brethren: conversion as a dynamic experience, obedience to the Great Commission, and compassion for a lost humanity.⁴ *Innere Mission* ("inner" missions) and *Aueserre Mission* ("outer" missions) are two expressions frequently found in the records. They do not, however, consistently refer to "home" missions and "foreign" missions. Rather, *Innere Mission* is used frequently to

describe work of the established churches, while *Auessere Mission* was considered evangelism beyond the local church. Gradually the two concepts assumed the meaning we usually attach to home and foreign missions.

A brief report of a brotherhood meeting on November 22, 1882, is available. Point 3 of this report is significant:

Concerning missions and the spreading of the true knowledge of the gospel, the brotherhood has today decided to alternate brethren and send them forth two by two wherever opportunities present themselves and the voice and call of the Lord is being heard and received. The church stands ready to support such undertakings financially. The first to be sent forth is Brother Loepke and a brother whom he will choose.⁵

At the same meeting workers were commissioned to visit the Nebraska fellowship periodically.

It is well to keep in mind that this was only eight years after the settlers arrived in Kansas. Many of them were still experiencing severe poverty and traumatic difficulties of pioneer life.

As a result of such activity, the church expanded fairly rapidly in Kansas, as the baptismal records in the diary of Elder Wiebe substantiate. Eventually the five churches in the Dakotas became the largest cluster in the conference.

In July, 1885, mention was made of sending assistance to the poor in Asia. In October of the same year all ministering members were encouraged to take part in *Innere Mission*. They were encouraged to learn the language of the country, English, in order to proclaim the gospel to the communities. In 1886 Martin Fast was delegated to visit an Indian territory (location not named) to explore possibilities of mission work among the Indians.

To strengthen the mission treasury, it was decided in 1887 to receive an offering for foreign missions on the first Sunday of each month. In 1889 it was reported that the mission treasury contained \$649. The following year \$55 was allocated for the support of a Bible woman in India (presumably for Abram Friesen's mission). In 1892 P.A. Wiebe reported on the treasury: Total income \$999.76; disbursements \$709.60.

The following year the conference designated \$100 for the Indian territory for the care of the sick (presumably this money went to a missionary by the name of Petker), and \$100 for an evangelist in India (presumably to the Friesens). The 1894 conference encouraged the districts to arrange for special mission festivals in order to stimulate greater interest in missions. In 1897 monies were sent to the Mennonite Brethren mission in Oklahoma, to the Light and Hope Mission (a Mennonite mission in Cleveland), and the Christian Alliance Mission.

North Carolina. Concrete steps toward an independent Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church mission were undertaken in 1898. The needs in the Kentucky Mountains were brought to the attention of the conference, which delegated several people to make an investigative trip to this territory. Heinrich and Elizabeth Wiebe were also presented to this conference as candidates for a ministry in India, possibly as a result of a visit by Abram Friesen.⁶ At the same conference it was decided to institute quarterly mission festivals in the churches to create more interest and greater participation. The question of a united mission with other Mennonite bodies was discussed, but the delegates declined the idea.

Following a report of findings in Kentucky at the next annual meeting, the conferences voted to open a mission center among the blacks in the Kentucky mountain area. In view of this decision, the Wiebes were asked to reconsider their call to India in favor of Kentucky. The Wiebes agreed to the change, and thus became the first missionaries to be appointed by the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference. An eight-member board was elected to initiate and direct the work.

In 1900 another decision was made to enter India, but no definite plans were made.

Meanwhile, the conference had become absorbed in the newly established work at Elk Park, North Carolina, in the heart of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. A Charter of Incorporation was obtained in 1901, and a deed secured for property there. The charter was registered in the State of Kansas in the name of the Mission Board of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church. (See Appendix) This was an important step for a small group of relatively small churches just emerg-

ing from the severe limitations of pioneer years.

The mission in North Carolina was maintained for many years under the Board of Foreign Missions. The work eventually expanded to several other centers and resulted in the establishment of six churches, organized into the North Carolina District Conference of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (now part of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches). The churches are in four communities: Lenoir, Ferguson, Boone, and Newland. Total membership in 1960 was 194. The numerical status of the churches has changed only slightly in the last decades. The conference is independent and self-sustaining.⁷

China Mongolia Mission. The next mission concern surfaced because two men went without conference approval into two different mission fields. In 1901 the H.C. Bartels went to China with the South Chihli Mission, based in Los Angeles,⁸ and the Franz Heins went to Nigeria with the Sudan Interior Mission. Both couples longed to work with the home conference, and both also had strong personal supporters in the Krimmer churches. Their work could not be disregarded or pushed aside without endangering the unity of the conference.

The Heins' case could be cared for easily by voting them an annual partial support, since organizationally they were part of the Sudan Interior Mission.

Bartels' case however, was different. After several years with the South Chihli Mission, the Bartels began an independent work in Shantung and Honan provinces, northwest of Shanghai and Nanking.⁹ Their motive was genuine. They expected to mobilize the support of the Krimmer churches in an enlarged mission program in China. To this end they formed the China Mennonite Mission Society in 1905. From denominational records it is evident that Bartel was not denomination-oriented; he seemingly understood little of the reluctance of denominational leadership to yield to interdenominational procedures. His ideal was to see a great inter-Mennonite work growing up in China. When he returned home in 1906 to promote this idea, he found neither understanding nor sympathy among the conference leaders. Though he returned to the field with strong moral and financial supporters and a warm relationship with his own brotherhood, he was unable to persuade

the leadership to officially accept or approve the work.

The matter became more complicated as the years rolled by. Nine new missionaries from several Mennonite denominations accompanied Bartel when he returned to China in late 1906. Another nine associated themselves with him in 1912. Soon four different denominations were involved: the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, the Missionary Church, and the Mennonite Brethren. An inter-Mennonite work began to unfold under the umbrella of the China Mennonite Mission Society — a movement with no direct denominational connection, direction or support. This created considerable consternation in the home constituencies.¹⁰

Some calm came into the troubled waters when the conference in 1918 decided to open a new, independent work in South Africa. When entrance permits were denied, China was selected instead as a field of operation.¹¹ Instruction to the Board was emphatic and clear: This was to be a work independent of the Bartel mission, and the missionaries were from the very beginning to introduce the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren confession of faith and fully conform in all church practices to conference regulations.

The F.V. Wiebes sailed for China in 1922. Bartel and Wiebe made an exploratory tour into Inner Mongolia and recommended that area to the home Board.¹² The Board and conference approved, and Inner Mongolia was chosen as the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Mission field, with Chotzeshan as the center of operations. The field was about 500 miles north of the Bartel mission.

In 1917 application was filed for a new charter which transferred ownership and legislative powers from the mission board to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church¹³ (See Appendix B.12, p.238). Thus the structure was ready for greater ministries.

To promote harmony in the matter of the two missions, the Board of Foreign Missions in 1922 presented a series of most conciliatory recommendations. Missionaries in both fields were to receive the same allowance; orphans and native evangelists in the Bartel mission were to be supported as before; and future workers had their choice of fields, China or

Mongolia. Seldom has a board acted more nobly or wisely. One could only wish that such an attitude could have prevailed throughout the years. This was not to be. Five years later cold winds began to blow upon the Bartel mission and continued to do so for the next twenty years. Only in 1946 were cordial relationships reestablished.¹⁴

The story of the two missions must be told elsewhere. Here we merely report that the work in Inner Mongolia continued without serious interruption until February, 1941, when all missionaries felt constrained to yield to the pressures of the American ambassador in China and leave for the homeland because of restlessness in the land and the invasion of the Japanese army. The Wienses returned once more in September, 1947; however they were compelled to leave early in 1949 because of communist restrictions on the movements of foreigners, and the difficulty created for the national church by their presence. This closed the doors of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren mission field in Inner Mongolia, as it soon did for all missions in China.¹⁵

The Bartel mission in Shantung province was also soon closed. As the Japanese army advanced, some missionaries were kept prisoners in their own homes, and after some time were interned by the Japanese army. They were later repatriated. Others moved ahead of the invading army and opened a new field in West China in the Szechuan province. This field was officially approved by both Krimmer and Mennonite Brethren conferences, which agreed to work side by side.¹⁶ The new work was not permitted to develop fully. By the end of 1951 all missionaries had been evacuated.

The Campa mission in Peru. In 1945 the Sylvester Dirkses of Waldheim, Saskatchewan, were accepted by the conference for work in Latin America.¹⁷ They went out initially with the Wycliffe Bible Translators and were assigned to Peru.¹⁸ After a few years, the Dirkses decided to withdraw from Wycliffe and opened a pioneer work for the Krimmer conference among the Campa people, a widely scattered tribe in the interior of eastern Peru. Activity centered in the Atalaya area, with El Encuentro as the actual base. From here an energetic program of evangelism was launched. Three other couples soon joined the Dirkses.¹⁹ The work is developing steadily and has been

transferred to the Board of Misisons and Services of the Mennonite Brethren.²⁰

North America. Somehow the work seemed to run ahead of the leadership: there was too much spiritual energy in the churches to let water freeze over. While the Board of Foreign Missions was occupied in North Carolina and China, other fields were being pioneered closer to home.

A work begun among the Spanish-speaking people of Arizona in 1915 never became a conference project and was eventually dissolved.

The city of *Chicago* became a center of activity. Here the Board of Foreign Missions was drawn in from the beginning. Though work was difficult, an independent church was eventually organized. In 1936 the conference established a Board of City Missions, and the Chicago work came under the direction of this new board.²¹ At present only the church, the Lakeview Mennonite Brethren Church, is in operation.²² It retains the character of a storefront church in a constantly changing neighborhood.

In 1941 the Board was asked to study the possibility of opening a mission in the *Ozarks* in Arkansas. Land was purchased at Compton, and work was begun at two other sites. None of these ministries resulted in Krimmer Mennonite Brethren churches. However, the work brought a unique twist into the conference: in 1947 a resolution was approved to let the churches of Arkansas assume the name of their communities rather than that of the founding denomination. The Compton church, for example, became the Compton Community Church.²³

The Board of Foreign Missions sent out and fully supported about twenty couples and many single women, and also contributed to the support of many Krimmer missionaries serving under other other mission boards in a program of collaboration approved by the conference. Home missions programs were assumed by the Home Missions Board, for example the Ozark work in 1953.²⁴

Merger with Mennonite Brethren

The idea of merger had never been totally absent from the minds of some leaders in both denominations. They were

neighbors geographically, had common cultural roots, were theologically very similar, and had closely related purposes. Members transferred freely from one denomination to the other.

Merger was discussed as early as 1876, and again in 1895.²⁵ The idea of a united mission, however, was voted down by the Mennonite Brethren in a crisis conference in 1896, and by the Krimmer conference in 1897.²⁶ Nevertheless the idea of collaboration did not die out; it worked very well, in fact, in education, with both conferences supporting Tabor College.

The next exploration of merger in foreign missions came about following World War 2. The first move was made in 1945 by the Krimmer Board of Foreign Missions in a recommendation toward affiliation with the Mennonite Brethren in foreign mission work.²⁷ The Mennonite Brethren Board of Reference and Counsel replied with a recommendation that such affiliation be heartily welcomed.²⁸

On May 8, 1946, the Krimmer Board of Missions made an appeal to the Mennonite Brethren. Now that the war was over, they wrote, young people were preparing to be missionaries, especially to China, India and South America; but the Krimmer board had no field other than China to offer them. Aware of their own inability to meet the great challenge of missions, and of the well-established Mennonite Brethren work in India and Africa, with a new work opening in South America, they proposed affiliation in foreign missions. They proposed that candidates be allowed to choose a field, either Krimmer or Mennonite Brethren, and promised to support their own candidates financially. They wished for representation on the Foreign Mission Board of the Mennonite Brethren Conference.

The Mennonite Brethren Board accepted the proposal and prepared a statement as a basis for collaboration. Exchange of candidates was welcome; both Boards would continue to operate, and each conference would be financially responsible for its own candidates. Collaboration became reality when the Arnold Priebs were appointed missionaries to the Mennonite Brethren field in the Congo (Zaire).²⁹ (For content of related proposals, see Appendix B.13, p.242).

The actual merger of the two missions, however, was more complicated. The Krimmer conference was collaborating with

several mission boards, so that their missionaries were scattered far and wide. Further, a retirement plan had been accepted by the Krimmer conference in 1952, from which all their missionaries would benefit, no matter under what board they were serving.³⁰ The Mennonite Brethren had never adopted such a broad platform. This created justifiable hesitation, even anxiety: What would happen to missionaries not serving in Krimmer Mennonite Brethren fields?

In anticipation of these tensions, the Krimmer Board presented to the 1958 conference a carefully worded document, spelling out in eight principles how they foresaw the merging of program and personnel (See Appendix B.14, p.244). Approval of these principles by the delegation calmed the constituency so that further negotiations could take place. Merger was to take place at all levels, and collaboration with outside mission boards was to be phased out.

Merger of the two boards of missions was finally consummated in a joint meeting on August 24, 1960. Here is the statement of the two boards.

Merger of KMB and MB Foreign Missions

Recommendation on foreign missions formulated and approved at the joint meeting of the two Boards of Foreign Missions of the K.M.B. and M.B. Conferences held on August 24, 1960, regarding the implementation and its procedure in the merger of foreign missions of the two sister conferences, to be submitted for consideration to the K.M.B. and M.B. General Conferences convening in the fall of 1960.

Since in the providence of God the two conferences, namely the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference and the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, have agreed to join hands in a complete merger into one conference the following plan for the implementation of the merger is visualized:

1. *The Board:* At the outset, the K.M.B. Conference is allowed to elect two members to the united Board of Foreign Missions to serve on the Board with full privileges during one conference term of three years, with the provision that after that the future election of a nine-member Board proceed on the regular constitutional basis in which representatives of the entire conference, including former K.M.B. brethren may serve.

2. *Time of Transfer:* It is mutually agreed between the two Boards that the time of transfer of the administrative and financial responsibility from the K.M.B. Board of Foreign Missions to the enlarged Board of Foreign Missions be January 1, 1961. Up to that date the treasury of the K.M.B. Board of Foreign Missions will continue to pay the salaries and other commitments to the foreign missionaries of the K.M.B. Conference.

3. *Applications:* Though applications for foreign missions service may continue to come in from candidates who are members of the present K.M.B. churches, any action on these applications is to be deferred until the enlarged Board of Foreign Missions takes over the responsibility of the Foreign Missions program on January 1, 1961.

4. *Agreement with K.M.B. missionaries*

a. All missionaries of the K.M.B. Conference are to be sent a copy of the new "Principles and Policies" prepared jointly by representatives from both mission boards for information.

b. Those missionaries serving under the direct auspices of the K.M.B. Board of Foreign Missions will, with the merger, automatically move into the rights, privileges, responsibilities, and service regulations governing other M.B. Conference missionaries as is set forth in the new "Principles and Policies" and in the constitution of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.

c. Missionaries under other mission societies. K.M.B. missionaries serving under the auspices of other mission societies shall be governed by the mutual agreement of the K.M.B. and M.B. Boards as is set forth in the basic statement agreed on in 1955 as follows:

(1) K.M.B. missionaries serving under various other mission societies at the present shall be allowed to continue that service if they so desire.

(2) Any commitment of financial support, whether that be support in part or as a whole, made to K.M.B. missionaries, by the K.M.B. Conference shall remain in force, one term at a time, as a sacred trust, unless it is mutually agreed between the conference and the missionary to terminate the agreement. It is also understood that any missionary receiving support agrees to abide by the "Principles and Policies" of the conference, in areas that apply to the missionary's service, and that the support continues only as long as the missionary remains in good standing and in spiritual sympathy with the home church and conference. While on furlough, any itinerating within the conference constituency is to be

directed by the home office of the enlarged Board of Foreign Missions.

(3) If, or when, missionaries serving under other mission societies transfer to Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions, they automatically come under the M.B. Conference regulations and privileges.

d. Missionaries of K.M.B. churches not merging. Missionaries of present K.M.B. churches which do not go along with the merger, are privileged to transfer their membership to a Mennonite Brethren Church upon which the regulations set forth in point "b" apply.

e. Missionaries of churches joining other denominations. Missionaries, whose membership is in a K.M.B. church that joins another denomination, and who retain their membership in that church, cease to be the responsibility of Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions.

f. In the case of missionaries on the field whose home church has not gone along in the merger or whose home church has joined another denomination, the promised financial support continues until they return for furlough, unless agreed on otherwise between the missionary and the Board.

g. Church responsibility. A church which does not go along in the merger retains the financial responsibility of the missionaries who are their own members and is heartily invited to continue to remain in the foreign missions program of the Conference.

5. Retirement Plan

a. All the missionaries serving under the auspices of the K.M.B. Board of Foreign Missions are automatically covered by the retirement provisions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America beginning January 1, 1961.

b. Missionaries serving under the auspices of other mission societies are covered by the retirement provision of those societies.

c. Missionaries who are not covered by paragraph a or b are to be provided for by a special arrangement covering the particular individual case. It is visualized, however, that all such missionaries are covered by social security.

d. Transfer of Retirement. All funds that have accumulated in the K.M.B retirement plan are to be transferred to the sinking fund for foreign missionaries of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. Beginning with January 1, 1961, the M.B. Foreign Missions treasury will pay all of the Social Security taxes for the missionaries and consequently

the retirement deduction will no longer be made from their salaries. The retirement provision will be entirely free to the missionaries.

Looking back over the years since the merger, the author is satisfied that justice has been done, brotherliness has prevailed and the blessings of God have rested upon the joining of forces and resources. Today one brotherhood conducts one program in harmony and mutual respect.

Discussion questions for Chapter 6

1. Mennonite young people have felt called to serve in some land where their conference has no work, and have turned to faith mission organizations. How should the Mennonite Brethren churches and conference respond to the vision of such people, given their theology of church and their responsibility to carry out a mission program that has stability and depth?

2. The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference had a strong vision for reaching new fields within North America. In the emphasis on overseas work, has the Mennonite Brethren Conference after the merger overlooked its responsibilities for such pioneer mission work in this continent? If so, which denominational board should be entrusted with the responsibility for such work?

7

A CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Retrospect

It is my conviction that it was the gracious Holy Spirit who years ago brought spiritual renewal into the Mennonite colonies of Russia. Through the Word of God, he revitalized the lives of numerous church members and summoned the church to renewed efforts in world evangelization.

The same gracious Holy Spirit led in the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church, in which Bible study and prayer, evangelism and world missions were central from the very beginning. In fact, the emerging groups were first witnessing fellowships and foreign missions enthusiasts before they became the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The same gracious Holy Spirit guided the Mennonite Brethren in America to develop their own missions enterprise independent of other associations. History has justified this as a wise move.

The same gracious Holy Spirit has sustained the brotherhood to carry on the work over a period of 120 years. His presence, freshness and goodness have been felt repeatedly in times of prosperity and crisis. The mission cause today is vibrant. In general, a positive attitude prevails, and aggressiveness in leadership is expected and welcomed.

The same gracious Holy Spirit has been active on the mission field. As a result, there is a larger membership abroad than in North America. National conferences have developed in India, Japan, Zaire, Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia, Germany, and Austria; and Uruguay, Peru, Panama and Mexico each have several national churches. The report from China indicates that believers as individuals, families and smaller house groups have survived the pressures and persecutions

and may yet become the seedbed for an expanded work.

It can be stated with a humble sense of gratitude that the mission work of the Mennonite Brethren measures up well when compared to similar programs in most countries. In some countries it is clearly superior to work in adjoining areas, though in others it has suffered badly and needs redirection and revitalization. The endeavor has been fairly well provided for financially, and the care of missionaries has been satisfactory. Only on rare occasions have the fields been significantly short of staff. All in all, the work has gone well and prospered. No serious interruptions or secessions are recorded. The good hand of the Lord has been upon it.

In general, the ministry has been administered efficiently by the Board and its secretariat, although in later years a serious bureaucracy has crept in. Normally there has been a healthy relationship with most missionaries and with the national conferences. As records indicate, some missionaries were relieved of their assignments or were not returned to the field; others were transferred, while some founded independent ministries. It must also be admitted that some churches in India seceded and joined other groups. These incidents subtract somewhat from the generally smooth movement.

Serious ripples of discontent were felt in the churches in the 1940s and 1950s when there were more missionary volunteers than the Board felt it could accept because of limited finances and fields. A movement toward the independent or faith mission set in, with churches and individuals subscribing heavily toward support of their members and friends. By the middle of the 1950s, however, the tide had crested. An aggressive deputation and educational ministry on the one hand, and a more progressive program of sending out missionaries on the other hand, calmed the constituency.

There were some serious problems and blunders along the way. Despite considerable research, this author has not been able to find justifiable cause for the F.J. Wienses to proceed independently to China, for the A.A. Janzens of Congo to wait more than twenty-five years to be received into the conference, for the Africa Missionary Society to be formed, and the Western Children's Mission to have to pressure the opening of a ministry in Colombia. Clearly the Board was either not alert

to the forward motion of the constituency, or it hesitated to enlarge, though the churches were ready to send and to support. Was it truly concern for concentration on one field and thus calculated prudence on the part of the Board? Or was it impatience and lack of wisdom on the part of personalities and churches involved? Time has not answered these questions satisfactorily. Thus they appear like dark blots on a generally appealing canvas.

The records show that there have been crisis conferences in the brotherhood (1896, 1898, 1912, 1936, 1954, 1957) and also crisis issues, recommendations and official statements (1909, 1919, 1943, 1957) which do not adorn the Board and brotherhood. Some disturbing behind-the-scenes maneuvering is evident in several of these conferences and issues. It may also be questioned whether the pressure toward centralization of the foreign missions enterprise, and later the total Christian Service program and some relief ministries, was a wise arrangement. History has not yet justified it.

With a sense of apprehension I look at the statement which the Board presented to the conference in 1957 in Yarrow, B.C. The partnership principles as projected at that conference, and other conferences, may have been too idealistic for the time and circumstances. Perhaps they were too western and too unilaterally conceived. The records would indicate that implementation has fallen far short of original intentions and hopes. The Thrust Evangelism program has not fared much better, for whatever reasons.

The tension between those who favor concentration in specific fields to build up strong churches and those who urge proliferation in order to enter as many countries and ministries as possible goes on, according to the records available. Mission education in the local churches remains at a low ebb. Most deputational ministries are geared towards information and are low in motivation. They are not building an intelligent and zealous understanding of missions. Much education of a sort is being done by the conference periodicals.

These and other weaknesses, however, must not close our minds to the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, who has guided the brotherhood and sustained the work throughout the years.

Prospects

It would appear that the prospects for the Mennonite Brethren missions enterprise are encouraging.

Theologically, the Lord has graciously preserved the brotherhood from serious error and the infiltration of liberalism, though an open-ended theology is making itself felt. The churches and pastors are evangelical, conservative, biblical. Thus, the backbone is healthy.

Spiritually, the mission vision is fairly clear, mission motivation in the churches is strong and concern genuine. The churches rally easily to special challenges and opportunities. Interest remains strong among young people, resulting however, only in meager response to recruitment. Bible institutes, colleges and the seminary have good groups of students interested in the work of the Lord.

Organizationally, the prospects are fair. The melting together of three streams in the Board of Missions and Services—the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren mission enterprise—temporarily succeeded to a fair degree. The united body is energetic, though in some ways it seems to be only limping along. With this difficulty and reorientation practically hurdled, the task should move more smoothly and aggressively.

It is also gratifying to read that the Board and secretariat wrestle seriously with some of the basic issues involved in new advances in the transformed Third World. It can be expected that new fields, programs, and projects will be introduced to the constituency to challenge old and young.

I am confident that the brotherhood will gladly follow an aggressive, wise and innovative leadership. This is very evident from the records of the 1975 conference, where the churches adopted some unusual and far-reaching recommendations of the Board to minister in Indonesia and Africa in new situations and new relationships, and to enter Spain as a new field of mission. It is very evident that world evangelism is still the first love of the Mennonite Brethren churches.

Challenge

Despite these good prospects, I must inject a special note

of concern. An essential ingredient in the total philosophy of missions is missing among Mennonite Brethren. I have not been able to discover, not even detect, a genuine concern for the peculiar contribution which the Mennonite Brethren can and ought to make to the world church, and in particular to the present evangelical movement around the world. The Lord has vested in the Mennonite Brethren some specific graces which are not only to be preserved, but to be shared. I refer to the Mennonite Brethren view of the church.

The believers' church. The Anabaptist-Mennonites pioneered the concept of the believers' church. This position is now widely accepted, particularly in America. To preserve and propagate this concept is not easy; it needs continuous reinforcement by teaching and model. Belonging to a church too easily becomes traditional and hereditary. The church is constantly in danger of becoming a social clan establishment, a *Volkskirche* (people's church) in which membership is handed down from one generation to another without the experience of genuine regeneration. This danger has greatly increased in the last decades because of the strong emphasis on mass evangelism and people's movements. It is a very short step from a people's movement to a people's church. The Mennonite Brethren have a vital role to play in world Christianity by boldly teaching the concept of the believers' church.

The church as a school of discipleship. Discipleship is a biblical concept filled with both social and spiritual meanings and value. Our Lord made disciples, and he commanded his apostles to make disciples. The practice of discipleship soon submerged in the history of the Christian church as the hierarchy developed. Discipleship as a central biblical emphasis was rediscovered and revived in the first half of the 16th century by the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement. Although the centuries modified many Anabaptist-Mennonite views and practices, the concept of discipleship never died out completely. It remained in the vocabulary and was expected to be practiced by the membership of the churches.

In recent years it has become a generally accepted word in Christian communities. Movements have arisen which make Christian discipleship their central emphasis: The Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ. Classes on discipleship are being

conducted in many institutions and numerous books have been published on the subject. This is a noble and worthy endeavor. It must be kept in mind, however, that these banner-carriers are parachurch movements and in many instances are not working through and for the local church.

The Mennonite Brethren have tenaciously clung to the position that disciples are to be made in the church and by the church, in order that they might serve with and through the church. The emphasis has been that the church is the divine institution to nurture and mold the believers into followers and disciples of Jesus Christ. Among its various functions the church is to be *a school of discipleship training*.

We believe this to be a biblical emphasis and practice, as is evident in the first part of Acts. As such, it ought to be articulated clearly, taught emphatically and carried into the evangelical churches around the world. Here is a contribution we should not be shy or slow to make in our day of bewildering movements.

The church as evangelizing body. We are witnessing a marvelous revival in evangelism. Workshops and conferences focus on this concern. This is clearly of the Lord, who has raised up organizations to carry the banner of evangelism around the world. In many ways these organizations have far outpaced Mennonite Brethren churches.

However, just at such a time the Mennonite Brethren have a contribution to make. In past decades they functioned as local evangelistic centers, for they looked upon the local church as God's agency in evangelism and world missions. They did not succumb to the idea that mission may be delegated to a separate agency which may not necessarily involve the total local church. It was always the entire brotherhood, and every local congregation, the total assembly, that undertook ministries. Evangelism was a body movement.

This total church involvement is healthy and biblical. It needs to be systematically and boldly taught.

The church as a functioning brotherhood. Evangelicals will agree that the church is more than an institution. Recently, the concepts of fellowship and body life have been rediscovered. This is of tremendous value and has resulted in renewal in many congregations. However, the brotherhood concept goes deeper

than these emphases and is little understood, even less practiced. The church is not only a spiritual fellowship, but a Spirit-regulated fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Unfortunately, many confuse the brotherhood concept with democracy. Ecclesiastical diplomacy too often has displaced brotherhood relationships and procedures. We must constantly remind ourselves that the church is not a spiritualized democracy. It is more than that. In a brotherhood, family relationships prevail, with all that such relationships entail. A brotherhood has its order, but also its mutual respect and responsibility. In a brotherhood needs are met and sorrows shared, burdens are borne and victories celebrated. There is no place for parties, politics or rivalries. There is no majority overruling a minority, or one party out-voting the other. Mutual respect, love and appreciation forbid such procedures. Patiently a common mind is sought, a consensus which the total brotherhood can support. There are no strangers or underprivileged, but a common experience, a common mind, common concern and purpose, a common faith and a common Lord.

The church as a brotherhood concept is an ideal on the highest level which no one will claim to have realized fully. Furthermore, idealizing and wishful thinking can easily displace reality. The question remains, however, do we actually accept the concept as being warranted by the New Testament? Do we know it? Do we believe it? Is it being taught? Do we earnestly strive for it?

The church as a functioning brotherhood has survived in the Mennonite Brethren churches at least as an ideal. The renewal of this concept would make a tremendous contribution to the world evangelical church.

The church as a spiritual home for the family. The Mennonite Brethren have not practiced household baptism or family church membership. But there has been a healthy emphasis that the family attend services as a unit. Strong emphasis has been placed on the church as a spiritual home for the family.

Because of this emphasis, few Mennonite Brethren churches exceed a membership of 500. It has been felt throughout the history of the denomination that smaller churches are more conducive to fellowship and particularly to the develop-

ment of that quality that makes a church a *family church*.

Few churches would measure up to the Mennonite Brethren in providing Christian day schools, academies (high schools), Bible schools, Bible institutes and colleges for their young people. Somehow the conviction prevails that the church, not merely the individual, is responsible for the spiritual nature of the constituency, young or old.

The concept of the family within the congregation is of great value and ought to be carried into the evangelical church of the world.

The Mennonite Brethren Church is small in comparison to other denominations. Numerical expansion is not to be minimized; but it is possible, and all too common in America, to become obsessed with numbers. Quality must not be surrendered to quantity. The Mennonite Brethren churches, being small, have values in their heritage which could greatly aid the world evangelical movement to preserve a much-needed qualitative-quantitative equilibrium.

The churches need seriously to define these values and design strategies to promulgate them effectively. For if the Lord actually raised up the Mennonite Brethren Church, as we believe he did, if he vested in them significant values, then to neglect these values is tragic; but to propagate them is to share the grace of the Lord.

The Mennonite Brethren leadership, Board of Missions and Services, and educational institutions face a serious challenge. To use well the special graces given by God requires wisdom and humility as well as courage. All this the same gracious Holy Spirit can and will supply to those who not only live by faith, but also walk in the Spirit. In him is our responsibility, sufficiency and adequacy.

Discussion questions for Chapter 7

1. Review the Mennonite Brethren distinctives. What implications do they have for the way we do missions? How best can we put them into practice in our own work?

APPENDIX A

A study guide

by Paul G. Hiebert

We live with the illusion that we exist at the center of time and human activity, that somehow the decisions we face are more crucial than those made by our fathers, that the age we live in is unique. A study of history, though, can make us feel a part of the broad sweep of human endeavor, and of God's greater purpose and activity. This book seems to help us understand the struggle of our forebears in laying the foundations for foreign missions.

In tracing the development of missionary vision and resultant missionary activity of the Mennonite Brethren (MB) and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (KMB) churches from the perspective of the sending churches and their boards, Dr. George W. Peters helps us recapture in part the vision that sustained and motivated our forebears. But we must remember that this is only one part of the missions movement. The story of mission work in countries around the world as seen by the missionaries and, to some extent, by the church leaders, is presented in the other volumes of this series. The story of the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren churches in these lands as told from the perspectives of the national leaders and people remains to be written.

A history such as this helps us understand the times in which we live, for the problems we face are often the products of the past, and they are not always new. We can learn from the experiences of the past.

In this study guide we will look at some of the key issues that the sending churches faced, and seek to apply the lessons they learned to the missions task we now face.

A. The structure of the mission organization

One of the most crucial questions facing the church today is: What is missions and how does it relate to the church? Is missions evangelism, or is it any witness the church gives to the world, including healing, relief, education and community development? Is missions the task of the whole church, or of a few called apart who have the call and vision for people beyond the witness of the local churches?

We must answer these questions on two levels. On the conceptual level we must have a theology of church and of mission that tells us what the task is all about and how we are to carry it out. At times we act with no explicit theology of mission, with no consciously formulated ideas about what we are doing. But even then we are directed by implicit, unexamined ideas and assumptions about the nature and operation of missions. Such unexamined assumptions are often the source of our deepest problems.

On the level of human activity, we must organize boards and committees, defining jobs, and allocate personnel and funds. These human structures are often built on cultural assumptions about the nature of relationships and power which may conflict with our theology of missions. The result is a tension between our theological beliefs and our actual practices — a tension that may lead to a modification of our beliefs or of our practices, or, more often, to a divorce between theology and practice. In such a divorce we must ultimately side with one or the other. We usually identify with what we *do* while giving only a verbal nod to *beliefs* that become increasingly irrelevant to our lives.

A number of answers have been given to questions about missions and its relationship to the church. But these can be lumped loosely into two categories.

1. *The church in mission*

Some individuals and churches see missions as the witness of the whole church to the world. This witness may be seen as general, the ministry to humans in all their needs: spiritual, mental and physical. Or it may be seen as specific, the evangelization of nonbelievers and the organization of believers into living churches.

Those who seek to build organizations and introduce missionary practices consistent with this concept of mission place the responsibility for initiating and carrying out missions upon the local church and the denomination. They organize denominational boards that represent the churches and carry out the wishes of the churches. Missionaries tend to be recruited from within the denomination, and supported by salaries provided by the churches.

Abroad the missionaries become members of the churches they plant and take offices within it such as pastor and treasurer. They do not organize a separate entity, "The Mission," that is set apart from the national church (*See Figure 1*).

This model of mission organization has certain strengths and weaknesses. It tends to have a strong theology of church. It is deeply rooted in the churches and is committed to the planting of churches. The task of mission is not done when people turn to Christ. They must be instructed and organized into congregations. They must be assisted until they are themselves a living mature church that can reproduce itself, and keep the truth in the face of persecution and competing ideologies. And finally, they must be incorporated into the body of the international church and its mission. This model also tends to minister to the whole person, for it sees mission as part of a greater theology of the church and the kingdom of God.

This approach has little problem with indigenizing the work and transferring responsibility to nationals. The missionaries are part of the church structure from the outset and this structure remains. Transfer of authority takes place as national leaders replace missionaries in the church offices. There is no mission structure that must be broken down.

The danger of this model is that the parent churches may lose their vision for missions. Having planted new churches they become so caught up in helping those churches mature that they lose sight of the many beyond who have not yet heard the gospel. Mission work tends to become inter-church aid. Moreover, there are so many needs to minister to abroad, and so many activities to support at home, that they lose their central commitment to evangelism and church planting.

2. *The church and mission*

Others see missions as a distinct activity related to the church but independent from it. The church, they feel, will always lose its missionary fervor over time. There must be Christians who are willing to step out and organize new mission ventures. They should form separate organizations that are not limited by the control of the church, for the church has a much greater task, and therefore, tends to lose its interest in missions. Missions is not the task of the church as a whole but of those who feel particularly called to that ministry.

This theology of missions has led to what is sometimes called the "faith mission" model of missions. Missionary leaders organize mission boards that are independent from the control of church or denominational governing bodies. These boards recruit missionaries who feel personally called to mission service and who raise their own support from interested individuals and churches. But the missionaries are primarily responsible in their work to their board rather than to their church.

This model tends to have a weak concept of the church, for the mission itself is distinct from and often suspicious of the church. Abroad it has led to a pattern in which the missionaries organize their own "Missionary Fellowships" that are distinct from the "Church." Their task is to start the church, and to turn the work over to this church when it is ready. The missionaries generally do not become members of the national church or hold offices in it. Their primary ties and memberships remain with their sending church. (*See Figure 1*).

The strength of this approach has been a strong zeal for reaching out to new unevangelized regions. Because there is only one focus — the evangelization of the world — there is less likelihood of distraction. Moreover, this model is particularly suited for specialized ministries such as translating and printing the Scriptures, radio and television broadcasting and Christian literature. These ministries are used by churches from a wide range of denominations, and therefore, have an appeal in a great many churches of different kinds.

But this model has its limitations. It tends to avoid the difficult and long-range task of building up new converts and young churches to strength and maturity. It also has a prob-

lem with indigenizing the work. Because there are two distinct structures, mission and church, the question arises when and how to transfer responsibility from one to another. Can the church maintain the institutions established by the mission? And how does the mission relate to the national church once the transfer has taken place — is there still a place for it, is it subordinate to the church, and what is its responsibility if the national church asks it to leave even though the church has no evangelistic outreach of its own? Finally, this approach sometimes leads to a focus only upon evangelism to the exclusion of concern for justice and human need.

3. A mixed model

As Dr. Peters point out, the Mennonite Brethren struggled early with the theological foundations of missions. The earliest efforts were by groups of interested individuals who often assisted missionaries serving in faith missions. But the conference soon took a stance that missions was the task of the church as a whole.

The early organization of missions in North America was consistent with this theology. A mission board was established that represented the churches and was responsible to them. Missionaries were supported by contributions to a central budget.

On the fields, however, the picture was different. In seeking to find a model for carrying out mission work, the early missionaries often turned to patterns developed by the faith missions. Like them, the early Mennonite Brethren missionaries organized mission fellowships distinct from the local churches they planted, kept their memberships in their sending churches, and saw missions as a temporary body that would withdraw as soon as the national church could assume responsibility for the work. Although many of them had a theology of mission that identified it with the church and a holistic ministry to the people, in practice their structures separated missions from the church and placed a strong emphasis on the ministry of evangelism.

This conflict between theology and structures on the field has some benefits. Their Mennonite theology led most of the missionaries to be more concerned with planting churches and

with holistic ministries than were many of those serving in faith missions. Moreover, the unified backing of the churches at home provided the missionaries and the churches they planted a stable support, a solid theology and a membership in an international body of churches upon which they could draw in times of difficulty.

But the conflict between theology and structures has led to the problems that the conference must resolve if it is to carry out its mission task effectively. We must make clear whether or not we see missions as the task of the church as a whole. If we respond in the affirmative, a number of key questions arise. In the face of the rapid growth of the program and the need for boards, full-time administrators, and missionary specialists, how can the local churches remain personally involved not only in support but also in giving direction to the mission work? How, in our concern for ministering to the whole person, can we keep our priority of evangelism and church planting? How do we renew our vision to reach beyond the churches we have already planted and avoid the danger of ending up only in programs of inter-church aid? How do we establish new mission outreach in countries where we already have planted churches without ignoring them but without being bound by their decisions? And how do we deal in our churches with the many faith missions that make appeals to our members and congregations?

A broad, should we continue to live with structures modeled after the faith missions, or should we revise them to fit our theologies? Should not missionaries be members of the churches they plant rather than forming separate missionary councils? Should not the mission board and the American churches relate directly to the national churches?

If, however, we agree that missions is primarily the task of a few called to the task, how should we organize our mission structures at home? Should our missionaries raise their own support and thereby build personal ties to specific individuals and congregations? Should we wait for individuals who feel the call of God to volunteer rather than seek to discern as churches who should go for us? Should we concentrate only on evangelism and reaching out to unreached peoples rather than on remaining in an area until a strong church is planted? And

should we see our mission board as only one among many mission agencies serving churches?

There may be alternatives to these two approaches to missions. But the Mennonite Brethren churches and their missionaries need to forge a clear theology of mission, and to build structures that match this theology if they want to maximize their effectiveness in missions in the future.

B. The content of the mission message

Closely related to the question of the structure of mission is the question of its message and task. As Dr. Peters points out, the Mennonite Brethren mission movement emerged from and was deeply influenced by the mission ideas and movements of its day. For the most part in the early twentieth century the central task of missions was thought to be evangelism. Pietism and American fundamentalism focused upon the ultimate destiny of humans to the almost total neglect of their present needs. Having emerged from a pietistic revival in the Russian Mennonite colonies, the Mennonite Brethren were deeply influenced by these beliefs.

On the other hand, the Mennonite Brethren had deep roots in an Anabaptist theology that stressed a holistic view of people that combined an emphasis on conversion with that of discipleship which expressed itself in a concern for righteousness, justice, compassion and Christian community. Evangelism was seen as central within a greater theology of the church and the kingdom of God.

Throughout their mission history the Mennonite Brethren have faced the tension between these two theological roots. On the one hand they have retained a strong concern for evangelism. On the other they have a strong theology of church and of Christian ministry to the world. At the outset, as Dr. Peters points out, they divided these two concerns between two institutions — between a board of missions and a board of relief and services. However, on the fields the missionaries brought with them their concern for ministry to the world as well as their zeal for evangelism. They established hospitals and schools as well as churches. And relief workers were often concerned about evangelism and church planting as essential parts of their Christian ministry. It became clear that

there was a great deal of overlap between the programs, and that this institutional division ran contrary to the Mennonite Brethren concern for a holistic ministry.

In an attempt to resolve the tensions that arose out of this dichotomous approach, mission and services ministries were merged and assigned to a single board. But this has not fully resolved the problem. Questions remain. Within the mission programs, what should be the balance between church planting and socioeconomic concerns? In the merger, will one of these emphases suffer at the expense of the other? On the other hand, a strong emphasis on evangelism and church planting can lead to a lack of concern for human need around the world at a time when such needs are increasing due to population explosions, growing political conflicts and economic inequalities. Should missions address themselves to these issues or is that the task of the church? Can missions afford to ignore these needs when many countries close their doors to missionaries who come only to evangelize? On the other hand, will not a concern for human need distract us from the central task of planting churches? And can the mission draw on available government grants for development or does this threaten to compromise its witness or unbalance its programs?

What is the message we bring and what is our goal in missions? What institutional structures can best help us to achieve this goal? And even if we hold to a theology that stresses ministries to the whole person and communities, is it best to carry these ministries out within a single institutional framework or by different agencies? These questions remain central in the current discussions of the churches and mission board.

C. The nature of the mission relationships

It is not enough to have a clear understanding of the mission structure, and of its message. For missions to take place, people must be chosen and sent, converts must be organized into living churches, and churches related to each other in broader fellowships. All of this requires the establishment of relationships between individuals and groups of individuals. To a great extent the success of missions lies in the nature and quality of these relationships. Mass media such as

radio and literature can inform a people, but they are not very effective in persuading people to leave their old faiths and to become followers of Jesus Christ. They are even less effective in drawing believers together into churches. Persuasion and incorporation into the body of Christ occurs primarily through interpersonal relationships characterized by trust and persuasion. To be sure, persuasion is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit has chosen to use human channels of communication to bring the gospel to people, and the nature of these channels can hinder or help the understanding and acceptance of the Good News.

Relationships in missions can be grouped into several types. While we look at each of these separately, we should keep in mind that they are parts of larger institutional structures and that the nature of each of them affects the nature of the others.

1. Relations between the mission board and the missionaries

Dr. Peters traces the shifts that have taken place in the relationships between the mission board and the missionaries. At the outset the mission board served largely as a service agency, raising funds and recruiting missionaries. Decisions regarding mission strategy and field programs were made by the missionaries. It was argued that the missionaries had the greatest knowledge of the field situations, and consequently of what should be done on the fields, so they were granted a great deal of autonomy.

While it is true that field personnel know the immediate needs of their fields and programs, it is also true that they often lose sight of the overall mission strategy. It is easy to be caught up in details of everyday life and to lose the bigger picture. It is simpler to make minor changes in existing methods and programs than to question their effectiveness and try new ones.

From the board perspective some fields over time seemed to perpetuate strategies that had long lost their effectiveness. On other fields missionaries seemed reluctant to turn the work over to the national churches. The question then arose about who is ultimately responsible for providing overall guidance to the mission programs — the field missionaries or the board?

This led to the decision at the Yarrow Conference that the mission board was ultimately responsible for the work. In view of the deep structural changes that this entailed, it is not surprising that the implementation of this decision led to hard feelings and a period of conflict between some fields and the board.

The centralization of mission planning and decision-making has led to a more systematic and unified approach to the carrying out of the mission task. But it has also raised some questions. Can a board that meets only for a few days twice a year realistically direct the mission work in more than a dozen fields? Major decisions often cannot wait, particularly in a time characterized by rapid change. New opportunities must be exploited rapidly before they pass, and new crises responded to before they destroy the work. Moreover, mission board members have their own vocations and cannot keep up with developments in the field of missions.

2. Relationships between mission board and secretariat

So long as the mission program involved only a few missionaries in one or two fields, and the board served only as a service agency, the home missions secretary could perform his duties on a part-time basis. But with the growth of the program, and later, with the responsibility of administering the work, it became clear that full-time staff were needed to serve in a home office. This led to a division of labor between the Mission Board and the secretariat.

Here the question of ultimate responsibility and authority arose again. Was the secretariat a service agency responsible for carrying out the decisions of the board? This was the early pattern of relationships between the two. But it became clear that a board made up of those not directly involved in missions and meeting only occasionally could not be expected to provide a coherent overall plan for missions or direct the programs designed to carry it out. The vision and direction for the work must rest in those who are directly involved in carrying out the work. The board can serve as a check — as a control to see that the vision and programs stay within the mandates of the churches.

The result was the emergence of a strong secretariat that

provided leadership, and a board that monitored the directions it took. New mission strategies were tried and evaluated, and an overall mission philosophy developed.

But as Dr. Peters points out, this centralization raises its own questions. How can the secretariat relate to the missionaries so as to be responsive to their concerns and vision and yet provide them with clear guidance? What responsibilities should it delegate to them in order to facilitate day-to-day work on the field? And does not the introduction of the secretariat and a unified budget create a distance between the missionaries and churches that reduces the mission interest in the churches generated by immediate contact with the work? These questions remain the center of a great deal of discussion.

3. The relationship between the missionaries, the secretariat and the sending churches

At the outset the relationship between missionaries and the sending churches was a close one. Local churches often discerned and called missionaries from their own ranks. And missionaries on deputation were the primary means of informing the churches of the work. With a small conference and a small group of missionaries, the relationships were intimate.

Several factors changed the picture. First, there was a rapid growth in the number of missionaries sent after World War 2. Local churches no longer personally knew all of the missionaries they supported. Second, the churches themselves were changing. Many of them were no longer country churches. The rapid pace of urban life left little time for extended missions conferences. And the rising social status and the accompanying professionalism of the laymen in the churches meant that they understood centralized financing and planning, and they demanded more polished mission presentations. Literature, radio, audiovisuals, short mission conferences featuring mission specialists and budgeted giving fit the lifestyle of the city churches more closely. Finally, the emergence of a strong secretariat provided the churches with a central clearinghouse that could assist them in organizing their mission activities.

But these changes have raised some fundamental ques-

tions. How are missionaries to be recruited? In the past, local churches often selected and commissioned members from their own ranks. Later, individuals feeling a "divine call" applied to the board and were appointed upon confirmation of this call. Then the board sought to find them a place to serve. In many instances new positions and programs had to be created to accommodate people who had been appointed. Today some believe that the board and secretariat should plan mission programs and call people to fill specific tasks within these programs. Local churches would be asked to discern people to fill specific needs. But then what should be done with those who feel a personal call to missions and apply to the mission board but who do not fit the current needs of the mission program?

Another question is how missionaries should relate to local churches. It is clear that the personal touch is needed to keep mission interest alive in the churches. But with shorter terms, furloughs are often too short to ask the missionaries to travel through the churches. Moreover, some of them cannot make the polished presentations expected by modern churches. Consequently some missionaries raise more interest and funds at home than others who may be more effective on the field. This can lead to a tension and resentment. Finally, the number of missionaries is now so large that no church can relate personally to them all.

Closely tied to the relationship between missionaries and sending churches is the question of personalized mission giving. Many people like to designate how their money should be used. The easiest way to do this is to send the money directly to the missionary. This fosters a personal tie to the work and encourages giving. On the other hand, it can lead to rivalries and misuse. Some missionaries can raise large sums over which they have personal control. Others cannot. And funds used for personal projects often warp the overall mission strategy. Comprehensive mission strategies demand that there be a balance between the various programs. And personalized giving, while it fits with western cultural values of individualism, does not fit well with a strong theology of the church as a single body or brotherhood. But giving to a unified budget often appears to be impersonal, and the giver all too easily loses the sense of personal involvement that sustains his

or her interest in missions.

Tension between missionaries and the board or secretariat raises another problem. Missionaries who disagree with the home administration over strategies or programs may turn to their home churches to have their case heard. These churches, in turn, may question the wisdom of the administration. The result can lead to harmful misunderstanding between the three groups.

Finally, the relationship of the MB mission program to the sending churches raises the question of non-MB missions. Mennonite Brethren young people often serve under other boards, and other missions raise money in MB churches. How should the board, the secretariat and the missionaries respond to this? Should they discourage church involvement in other missions? Or should they encourage it even though they see great needs in their own fields and have a greater trust in the MB mission programs?

4. The relationship between the mission board, secretariat and missionaries, and the national churches

Successful mission work leads to the planting of new churches, but this leads to new problems. How should the missionaries and board relate to these churches? And what rights and responsibilities do the new churches have?

The first of these questions was answered in India and Africa by adopting the faith mission model of missions. The missionaries organized a council distinct from the national church. They represented the sending church in negotiations with the church. As authority for planning mission strategy moved to the home office, the secretariat began directing negotiations with the national churches. While the missionaries often negotiated with local churches or with a group of churches within their particular mission field, negotiations with the home office called for a single representative of all the national churches. Out of this emerged national conferences and governing bodies that represented all the churches in a single country.

As a result of this shift, the role of the missionaries was less clear. They were no longer spokesmen for the board of sending churches, but nor were they members of the national

church speaking out on its behalf to the board.

A second consequence of the shift has been some organizational tension in the national churches. In order to negotiate with the mission board, they have had to organize central governing bodies to represent them. Yet these central bodies were often based upon uneasy alliances between churches belonging to different regions, tribes or castes. Conflicts over control of power and funds has led to the breakdown of some of these central bodies, and to the reorganization of the administrative structures along regional and ethnic lines. This raises the question of whom the home board should negotiate with — the central governing body of the churches, or with their more stable regional conferences. Fortunately not all of the national churches have faced this problem. Those established from the beginning under comprehensive programs administered by the home office have developed strong central conference structures.

Attempts by the home office to negotiate with national churches abroad have also had their difficulties. Should representatives of these churches be invited to attend sessions of the mission board or should representatives from the secretariat visit the fields periodically to negotiate mutual programs? In either case the distance is great and levels of understanding of the field situations can be low. Such understandings can be achieved only by prolonged field visits and home administrators cannot be absent for such lengths of time.

Another variable has affected the relationships between missions and national churches, namely indigenization. All have recognized that the goal of missions is autonomous national churches that are adapted to their cultural contexts. But how can this best be achieved? Early mission strategists emphasized the “three-self”: self-support, self-propagation and self-governance. The achievement of each of these has had its problems.

Early mission work was largely built on foreign funds. Mission stations with their schools and hospitals were built along western lines. Generally they were far too costly for the national churches to support financially. Consequently the withdrawal of mission funds caused drastic cutbacks or even

closure of the work (it should be remembered that not all this change was bad).

Self-propagation called for an evangelistic church. But churches struggling to train and support the leaders needed for their own survival often could not undertake large programs of evangelistic outreach. Growth often took place by personal witness along lines of kinship and ethnicity. Moreover, to ask these new churches to reach other tribes or castes who were their traditional enemies or who ranked much above them may have been unrealistic.

Self-governance, too, had its problems. But here the problems often stemmed from the fact that the missionaries introduced types of church organization foreign to the people. Democracy and voting are not understood in many parts of the world, and new church members are uncomfortable with that type of organization. Furthermore, missionaries were not always sure that the people could administer themselves by these new principles and tended to keep their hand on the administration of the churches.

Efforts to achieve these three goals of indigenization continue. But to them must be added the fourth self: self-theologizing. Does a national church have the right to develop its own theology upon its own reading of the Scriptures and the application of scriptural principles to its own cultural setting? Or does the sending church retain the right to control the theology of the new church? This question is only now emerging in many parts of the world, but it may well be one of the central problems facing the international church in the next decades.

5. The relationship between Mennonite Brethren churches around the world.

As Mennonite Brethren churches are planted in countries around the world, what should be the relationship between them? This question needs to be answered on at least two levels. First, how should they relate in order to support and strengthen one another? Second, how can they work together to carry out the churches' mission to the world?

To some extent beginning steps have been taken to develop the first of these. Official visitors have been invited to

the Mennonite Brethren General Conference meetings on several occasions. Moreover, the Board of Missions and Services (BOMAS) has sent out ministers and representatives to the national churches to conduct special conferences, and invited church leaders from around the world to visit the North American churches. This has encouraged mutual trust and fellowship. BOMAS has also continued to assist national churches even after they have become autonomous by negotiating to help them with particular types of ministry, such as the operation of Bible schools and hospitals.

But is this enough? Should there be closer fellowship not only between the MB churches in other countries and BOMAS, but also between those churches and the North American churches? Would it be good to establish relationships between committees of "reference and counsel" in the different countries to assist one another with problems of faith and church operations? Could the seminaries in these lands work out exchange programs? And should there be a world MB conference with delegates from all these churches?

The second level of relationship, namely cooperation for further mission outreach, raises several difficult problems, and some exciting possibilities. Among the former is the question, what should BOMAS and the North American churches do when they feel called to start a new mission work in a country where they have already planted indigenous MB churches? Do they need the approval of these churches before beginning such a work? To answer yes can often bind their hands. Young churches often feel that all the assistance the North American churches can give should be given to them, for are they not poor and often weak? BOMAS, looking at the unevangelized millions in neighboring regions of the country, may want to reach out in new programs of church planting, but they cannot do so without the approval of the local MB churches. The result is that the doors to new work in that land are closed, even though the local churches are unable to evangelize the unreached regions of their own country. On the other hand, if BOMAS begins a new mission work in a country in opposition to the local MB churches, what happens to our belief in brotherhood and mutual trust?

One exciting possibility is the growing potential for mis-

sion outreach as new churches join in the common task of missions. One of the most rapidly growing mission forces in the world today is that of the young churches outside North America and Europe. How can North American MB churches work with their sister churches in other lands to begin new mission ventures? Has God given the North American churches financial resources and some of the other churches resources of personnel that can be combined for a new mission outreach? For example, to reach the Indians living in East Africa, should BOMAS join with the India MB Church in sending an Indian missionary to Kenya or Tanzania? What other types of joint mission programs might one consider? And would there be an advantage to have an international mission strategy agency representing MB churches from all over the world to help stimulate and coordinate mission programs around the world?

Mennonite Brethren missions is entering a new era. The colonial age with its political and economic stability, relative ease of acquiring visas to most parts of the earth, and vast unevangelized regions has come to an end.

Today political unrest, revolutions and terrorism are endemic in many parts of the world, and BOMAS and the North American churches must decide what they will do when their missionaries are kidnapped for ransom, or their lives are threatened. On the other hand, times of unrest and turmoil have often been times when people are most responsive to the gospel. How do we carry on missions in a time of political and economic unrest?

Today the doors to many countries are closed to missionaries, particularly those engaged in evangelism and church planting. Doors now open may close suddenly, and those now closed opened unexpectedly. How can we reach people closed to direct ministries? How can we best use short times we have in some lands? And how can we strengthen the churches in lands now closed to missions?

Today there are autonomous churches in many of the lands we ministered to in the past. But there are still many millions of unevangelized people in these lands. How can we carry out the Great Commission Christ gave to the church to preach the gospel to all peoples of the world without embittering the young churches we have already planted?

George Peters has done us a good service by tracing Mennonite Brethren involvement in missions, and by outlining many of the key issues they have had to face. It is hoped a careful understanding of the past with its successes and failures can help us plan for missions in the future. The times may be more difficult, but Christ's commission was not confined to times of ease. Despite the hardships, there are evidences that we may be entering one of the greatest eras of modern mission history. May we not be caught unprepared when God begins a new work on earth.

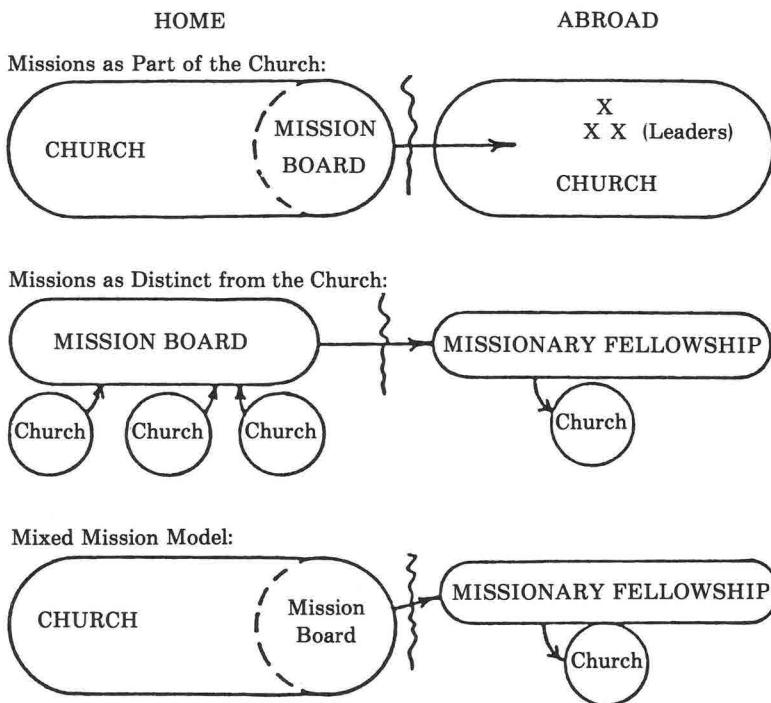


Figure 1 Three common social structures used in mission work.

APPENDIX B

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ For a one-volume history of the Mennonite Brethren Church see J.A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno, CA: Mennonite Brethren Board of Christian Literature, 1975).

² P.M. Friesen, *Alt- Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland (1789-1910)* (Verlagsgesellschaft "Raduga," Russia: 1911); A.H. Unruh, *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Bruedergemeinde* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: The Christian Press, 1955); Peter Regier, *Kurzgefasste Geschichte der Mennoniten Brueder-Gemeinde* (Berne; IND: Light and Hope Publishing Co., 1901); Jacob P. Bekker, *Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, trans. by D.E. Pauls and A.E. Janzen (Hillsboro, Kansas: The Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the Midwest, 1973).

³ J.J. Hildebrand, *Hildebrand's Zeittafel* (Winnipeg, 1945), pp. 354-55.

⁴ P.M. Friesen, pp. 71, 72, 98-101; Anna Brons, *Ursprung, Entwicklung und Schicksale der Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten* (Norden, Germany: 1884), pp. 284-86; C.H. Smith, *The Mennonites in America* (Goshen, Indiana: published by author, 1909), pp. 147-50.

⁵ John Horst, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1942), p. 271; Anna Brons, pp. 284-86.

⁶ Personal interview with I.P. Friesen, professor, Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Clarence Hiebert, professor, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁷ See Mennonite Brethren Publishing House.

⁸ J.P. Bekker, *Origin of the M.B. Church*, pp. 17-30; Abram Kroeker, *Pfarrer Eduard Wuest* (Selbstverlag, 1903).

⁹ P.M. Friesen, pp. 189-92; Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten* (Halbstadt, Russia: Kommissionsverlag und Druck von H.J. Braun, 1908), pp. 174-76; Peter Regier, pp. 15-2-; J.P. Bekker, pp. 43-47.

¹⁰ Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: Verlag von Julius Beltz, 1923), p. 56.

¹¹ Compare Document of Secession in P.M. Friesen, pp. 189-91; Peter Regier, pp. 15-20; and J.P. Bekker, pp. 43-46.

¹² Adolf Keller and George Stewart *Protestant Europe: Its Crisis and Outlook* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 93.

¹³ Waldemar Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen des Russischen Stundismus* (Kassel, Germany: J.G. Oncken Verlag, 1956), pp. 22-27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸ *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815-1915*, Band I, pp. 93ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Gutsche, p. 27.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

²³ F.H. Littel, *The Free Church* (Boston: Starking Press, 1957), p. 37. In the author's view the Mennonite Brethren Church was a "reconception" movement because it included several elements of non-Mennonite tradition, such as church polity as well as church organization. The autonomy of the local church, for example, is not a Mennonite tradition.

²⁴ Littel, *The Origin of Sectarian Protestantism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, Second edition, 1968), pp. 78-110.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Horst, *Mennonites in Europe*, p. 316.

²⁷ Littel, *The Free Church*.

²⁸ J.C. Wenger, *Even Unto Death* Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1961), p. 103. See also Wolfgang Schaeufele, *Das missionarische Bewusstsein und Wirken der Täufer* (Neukirchner Verlag, Neukirchen Vluyn, 1966). In this comprehensive piece of research Dr. Schaeufele documents extensively our contention and firmly establishes the fact that evangelism and world missions were live issues in the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement.

²⁹ F.H. Littel, *Origin of Sectarian Protestantism*, ch. IV, "The Great Commissions," pp. 108-27.

³⁰ Eldon T. Yoder and Monroe D. Hochstetler, *Biblical References in Anabaptist Writings* (mimeographed book in Dallas Theological Seminary Library), pp. 146-48, 153-55, 172-73, 205-6.

³¹ F.H. Littel.

³² F.H. Littel, pp. 122, 130.

³³ *The Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), I, 75; II, 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ A variety of sources provide general information.

³⁶ Th. E. Jensma, *Doopsgesinde Zendug in Indonesien* (Gravenhage, Netherlands: Boekencentrum N.V. -'S 1968), pp. 1-9; E.G. Kaufman, *The*

Development of the Missionary and Philanthropic Interest among the Mennonites of North America (Berne, IN.: Mennonite Book Concern, 1931), pp. 47-8; T. Kuiper, *Jahrbuch der Alteevangelischen Taufgesinnten der Mennoniten Gemeinden*, ed. by H.G. Mannhart (Danzig, 1888), Report 1888, pp. 98-105.

³⁷ P.M. Friesen, pp. 117-18; R.H. Glover, *The Progress of World-wide Missions* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931), pp. 81-84.

³⁸ J.A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, p. 27.

³⁹ Jakob Schmitt calls Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740-1817) "Der Mann von Sturm und Drang" and "Patriarch der Erweckung." Jakob Schmitt, *Die Gnade Bricht Durch* (Kirchenoberrat Archives, Stuttgart, n.d.).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 17-18.

⁴¹ P.M. Friesen, pp. 78-79.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-86.

⁴⁵ A.H. Unruh, *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Bruedergemeinde*, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁶ P.M. Friesen, p. 556.

⁴⁷ P.M. Friesen, pp. 552-556; A. H. Unruh, p. 327.

⁴⁸ P.M. Friesen, p. 556. Note the expression, "Lebensgeschichte unsres Missionsvaters Heinrich Dirks."

⁴⁹ Another authority dates the organization at 1728. Footnote in Jensma, *Doopsgezinde*.

⁵⁰ Kaufman, *Development*, p. 48; P.M. Friesen, *Geschichte*, pp. 549-50.

⁵¹ Kaufman, *Development*, p. 48.

⁵² Alternate date given, 1821.

⁵³ Kaufman, p. 48; Jensma, pp. 1-5. Information on the missionary work of the Dutch Mennonites in this and following paragraphs is found in Jensma, pp. 1-63.

⁵⁴ In German, Die Taufgesinnte Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung des Evangeliums in den Niederlaendishen ueberseeischen Besitzungen.

⁵⁵ Personal information obtained from Bible Society of Indonesia, Djakarta, Indonesia.

⁵⁶ Jensma, p. 36; P.M. Friesen, p. 556.

⁵⁷ Jensma, pp. 55-63, footnotes.

⁵⁸ Assorted Mennonite Yearbooks.

⁵⁹ Abram Kroeker, *Pfarrer Eduard Wuest*.

⁶⁰ Hans Brandenburg, *Eduard Wuest, Unsere geistlichen Ahnen* (no publisher or date), Heft 26; *Christen im Schatten der Macht* (Wuppertal, Brockhaus Verlag, 1974), pp. 44-48. In his book *Die Evangelische Bruedergemeinde*

meinde Korntal (Wuertemburg, Verlag Ernst Franz, p. 59) Fritz Gruenzveig writes: "Uniquely successful was the ministry of Wuest among the Mennonite churches in Russia. 1860, one year after his death, the revived among the Mennonites gathered themselves together into churches according to the model of the Korntaler Gemeinde (church) into Brethren churches. At the turn of the century they counted about 10,000 members in Russia. Today (no date stated) they have lively and sacrificial churches in Canada, U.S.A., Brazil, Paraguay and other places. Thus Eduard Wuest has carried the heritage of Korntal into the distance." (The early kinship and debt of the Mennonite Brethren Church to the Korntal Breudergemeinde has thus far not been sufficiently studied. I venture to say that the kinship was closer and the debt greater than is being admitted today by the strong Anabaptist emphasis in our midst. I dare say that the Mennonite Brethren Church has been greatly enriched by outside sources and is more than an Anabaptist Restitution. She is that, but more than that.)

⁶¹ Abram Kroeker, *Pfarrer Eduard Wuest*; J.P. Bekker, pp. 22-30.

⁶² Brandenburg, *Christen im Schatten*, pp. 47-8.

⁶³ Brandenburg, *Eduard Wuest* (Heft 26). The Korntal church had obtained the permission from the King of Wuerttemberg to separate from the state church but to function within the Lutheran Confession and to receive state recognition and support. Johann Hesse, *Korntal Einst und Jetzt* (Stuttgart: Verlag von D. Gundert, 1910), pp. 5-21.

⁶⁴ Oberkirchenrat Archives, Stuttgart.

⁶⁵ Brandenburg, *Eduard Wuest*, Heft 26.

⁶⁶ Joseph Schnurr, *Die Kirchen und das Religioese Leben der Russlanddeutschen*, p. 229; *Der Beobachter—Ein Volks-Blatt aus Wuerttemberg* (July 21, 1845, Tuebingen University Library), Article No. 186.

⁶⁷ Oberkirchenrat Archives, Stuttgart.

⁶⁸ Brandenburg, *Christen im Schatten*, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid. The three churches were known among their own people as Separatist Evangelical Church of the Brethren (Lutheran), or *Evangelische Bruedergemeinde*.

⁷⁰ Brandenburg, *Eduard Wuest*, Heft. 26; *Christen im Schatten*, pp. 44-48; Abram Kroeker, pp. 75-84.

⁷¹ P.M. Friesen, pp. 169-173.

⁷² Brandenburg, *Eduard Wuest*, Heft 26.

⁷³ Abram Kroeker, *Eduard Wuest*.

⁷⁴ P.M. Friesen, pp. 169-173; Abram Kroeker, pp. 75-84; Brandenburg, *Christen im Schatten*, pp. 46-7.

⁷⁵ P.M. Friesen, pp. 169-73.

⁷⁶ J.A. Toews, personal written comment. Accusations as found in the archives indicate that Pfarrer Wuest was strongly inclined toward believer's baptism, separated communion, and the believer's church concept.

⁷⁷ P.M. Friesen, p. 186; J.A. Toews, personal written comment.

⁷⁸ A.H. Unruh, pp. 67-70.

⁷⁹ Personal interviews with Elder Gerhard Regehr of Minneapolis and later Seattle, who was associated with the mission from its inception and served as vice-chairman for over twenty years; and Jakob W. Reimer, traveling Bible teacher for the Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia and Canada.

⁸⁰ P.M. Friesen, p. 113.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118. Saltet came to Russia as a Basel missionary in 1820. (Board of Missions records.)

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 119.

⁸³ P.M. Friesen, pp. 380-86; Adolf Ehrt, pp. 57-60.

⁸⁴ Adolf Ehrt, pp. 57-60.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; P.M. Friesen, pp. 380-386.

⁸⁶ Compare the "conference" of the German Baptists and the Mennonite Brethren General Conference on the one hand, and the Mennonite Church administration (*Kirchenkonvent*) on the other. It is also known that August Liebig, a German Baptist, presided at the first Mennonite Brethren conference (P.M. Friesen, pp. 385-6).

⁸⁷ Adolf Ehrt, pp. 57-60.

⁸⁸ Abram Kroeker, "Introduction to Dreiband" (The song book used by the Mennonite Brethren Church of Russia). J.A. Toews, p. 241.

⁸⁹ The Chortiza Mennonite Brethren Church adopted the Baptist Confession of Faith with adaptations and additions (Adolf Ehrt, pp. 57-60). See the "Confession of Faith," Mennonite Brethren Bible College Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

⁹⁰ All Mennonite Brethren missionaries from Russia prepared for their ministries at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary (personal interview with J.G. Wiens, Mennonite Brethren from Russia, missionary to India, and later Bible school teacher in Winkler, Manitoba).

⁹¹ Compare articles in the first 25 years of the *Zionsbote*.

⁹² Here evangelists and several missionaries studied in preparation for their ministries (Personal interviews with J.G. Wiens and J.H. Pankratz, missionaries to India).

⁹³ Letter to the editor by Harry Loewen. Mennonite Brethren Herald. January 20, 1978, Vol. 17, No. 2.

⁹⁴ *Die Mennonitische Bruedergemeinde*, possibly a modification of *Evangelische Bruedergemeinde*.

⁹⁵ The Chortiza Mennonite Brethren Church was strongly inclined toward the Baptist movement.

CHAPTER 2

¹ Gerhard Lohrenz, *A Legacy of Faith* (Publisher and date not available), p. 174.

² J.A. Toews, p. 15.

³ Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland*, p. 60.

⁴ See M.B. Fast, *Meine Reise nach Russland* (Scottdale, Pa: 1909).

⁵ Mennonite Brethren General Conference *Yearbooks*.

⁶ Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland*, p. 60.

⁷ See P.M. Friesen.

⁸ General Conference Report of the Mennonite Brethren Church (hereafter GCR), 1882.

⁹ Personal interview with Gerhard Regehr.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Heinrich Gossen, *Adolf Reimer, ein treuer Bote Jesu Christi* (Yarrow, British Columbia; Columbia n.d.).

¹² Gossen, *Adolf Reimer*; Aaron Toews, *Mennonitische Maertyrer* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Christian Press, 1949 and 1954), I, 67-72.

¹³ Personal interviews with Gerhard Regehr and Abram Unruh, Mennonite Brethren Bible teacher.

¹⁴ Interview with Abram Unruh.

¹⁵ Aaron Toews, *Mennonitische Maertyrer*, I, 67-72.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Gossen, *Adolf Reimer*; Aaron Toews, *Mennonitische Maertyrer*, I, 67-72.

¹⁸ An account of the tent mission is given in Gossen, *Adolf Reimer*. Tent mission was not new in Europe, especially not in Germany. No doubt the brethren learned to know and practice this type of work from the German "Zeltmission."

¹⁹ Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland*, p. 60. Compare also Abram Kroeker, *Christlicher Familienkalender* (Russia, 1907), p. 2; (1908) pp. 1-2; J. Lehman, *Geschichte der Deutschen Baptisten*, zweiter Teil, "Von 1848-1870," pp. 127-39.

²⁰ Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland*, p. 59.

²¹ Cornelius Krahn, "Social Attitudes of Mennonites of Russia," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Vol. 9, October 1935, pp. 173-74.

²² Conference lectures by Rev. Neprash, Coaldale, Alberta, July 1944; *European Baptist Union Report*, Vienna, Austria, July 1972.

²³ Material in this and following paragraphs about the mission to the Ostjaken was gathered by B.H. Fast, found in letters in "Licht im Osten." See also A.H. Unruh, pp. 351-65.

²⁴ J.F. Harms, *Geschichte der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1924), pp. 44, 281. See also contemporary issues of *Zionsbote*.

²⁵ P.M. Friesen, p. 560; J.F. Harms, p. 45.

²⁶ P.M. Friesen, p. 568; "A Brief Biography of Missionary Abram Friesen," *Tabor College Herald*, April, 1931.

²⁷ P.M. Friesen, p. 563; see also documents in Baptist files, New York office.

²⁸ P.M. Friesen, p. 560.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Personal interviews with Gerhard Regehr, as well as his diary and some correspondence.

³¹ P.M. Friesen, p. 561. In a letter written on Sept. 8, 1888, Friesen asked his elders for help on a decision: "As you know, we are this year completing our preparations for the work among the heathen. Consequently we are compelled in all sincerity to look for a decision on our field of future labor. Since we do not belong to ourselves, but in the first place to our church and our conference, we cannot undertake anything until we have been definitely instructed by our brethren what they expect to do in regard to mission work, whether they expect to continue their contributions to other missions, or whether they wish to develop a more independent mission. To organize an independent work we are too weak, but we are able to develop in association with a Baptist mission a work among the poor heathen that will really prove a blessing, if we but concentrate our whole strength upon a single point and send out our own workers into the already white harvest fields. If the missions friends of the Mennonite Brethren Church desire to develop a mission work, it will be essential to resume the work in a united spirit with united strength, a definite place, carry such work on hearts of prayer, and support it according to our abilities. Only in this wise will the work prosper, grow, and expand even though the beginning be small."

³² *Ibid.*, p. 563.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 565. The author later visited the area and found everything as reported, with poverty and physical needs greater than reported. He also saw how the work was prospering.

³⁵ *Baptist Annual Reports*, Vol. 71, p. 268; Vol. 73, p. 280.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 75, p. 274.

³⁷ P.M. Friesen, p. 565.

³⁸ P.M. Friesen, p. 565. *Baptist Annual Reports*, Vol. 78, p. 283.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Baptist Annual Reports*, Vol. 83, p. 352.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 78, p. 283; Vol. 79, p. 295; Vol. 80, p. 306; Vol. 81, p. 334.

⁴² P.M. Friesen, p. 566.

⁴³ David Downie, *The Lone Star* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1924), pp. 296-7.

⁴⁴ Documents in Baptist files, New York.

⁴⁵ Baptist files; interview with Gerhard Regehr; Letter from John G. Wiens.

⁴⁶ Documents in Baptist files.

CHAPTER 3

¹ C. Henry Smith, *The Story of the Mennonites* (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1941), pp. 638-48.

² C. Krahn, p. 8.

³ J.A. Toews, pp. 129-49.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 152-60; J.F. Harms, pp. 212-235.

⁵ *Mennonite Brethren Church, Winkler, Manitoba, 1888-1963* (prepared and published by the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church), pp. 3-7; J.F. Harms, pp. 88-90, 233-235.

⁶ GCR 1898.

⁷ Canada Mennonite Brethren Conference Reports.

⁸ GCR 1960.

⁹ Official correspondence from Mennonite Brethren Archives, Hillsboro, Kansas; compare also their histories and Confession of Faith.

¹⁰ GCR.

¹¹ GCR.

¹² GCR.

¹³ *Zionsbote*.

¹⁴ Gathered from articles in *Zionsbote* and personal interviews with N.N. Hiebert, J.F. Harms, H.H. Flaming, men who were active in founding the work.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Personal notes from H.W. Lohrenz's five lectures delivered in Hepburn, Saskatchewan at a missionary convention conducted by Western Children's Missions in 1942.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ G.W. Peters, *The Growth of Foreign Missions in the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Board of Foreign Missions, 1947).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Abram Schellenberg, *Zionsbote*, August 5, 1898. Katherine Schellenberg did not proceed immediately, but decided to complete her medical doctor's studies and then go to India.

²² N.N. Hiebert, *Zionsbote*, Jan. 25, 1901.

²³ From the very beginning the mission has been ministering in evangelism, church planting, education and medicine. It has been weak in economic development programs, as reports in GCR will bear out. See G.W. Peters, *The Growth of Foreign Missions*, pp. 191-207.

²⁴ Documents in Baptist files, New York office.

²⁵ Documents in Mennonite Brethren office files, Hillsboro, Kansas. No official complaints have been registered, though criticism has been expressed privately to the author by N.N. Hiebert.

²⁶ GCR 1919 and 1924.

²⁷ Personal interviews with B.B. Janz and C.A. DeFehr.

²⁸ Mennonite Central Committee Annual Reports, For a complete history, see John D. Unruh's *In the Name of Christ: A History of the Mennonite Central Committee and its Service, 1920-1951* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1952).

²⁹ GCR 1939.

³⁰ Personal information from H.W. Lohrenz, Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Mission, 1936-1945.

³¹ P.J. Klassen, "The Anabaptist-Mennonite Witness through Mutual Aid," *The Church in Mission*, ed. by A. J. Klassen (Hillsboro, Kansas: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1967), pp. 101-111.

³² GCR 1895.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Personal interview with P.C. Hiebert, chairman, Mennonite Central Committee and chairman of Mennonite Brethren Board of General Welfare and Public Relations. See also GCR 1921.

³⁵ GCR 1924.

³⁶ The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations assisted the ministers financially, established Bible schools for the young people, and sent Bible teachers, pastors and evangelists to assist in special ministries. It cultivated a deeper spiritual life in the churches and clarified many doctrinal issues. See the board's *Guiding Principles and Policies*, 1963.

³⁷ GCR 1966. See also *Guiding Principles and Policies* of Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, 1963.

³⁸ GCR 1960.

³⁹ Clarence Hiebert, "World Missions and Ministries of Compassion," *The Church in Mission* p. 349.

⁴⁰ GCR 1957.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² GCR 1966.

⁴³ GCR 1960.

⁴⁴ GCR 1966. Note the progress in the Constitutions of 1954, 1957, 1960, 1963.

⁴⁵ GCR 1966.

⁴⁶ Bruce Nicholls, in a report to Lausanne Conference, 1974.

⁴⁷ Documents in office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁴⁸ Board of Foreign Missions *Handbook*, 1960; see also handbooks for 1957, 1963.

⁴⁹ Board of Foreign Missions *Handbook*, for 1947, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1973, 1975.

⁵⁰ Reactions received by the author in field visits.

⁵¹ GCR 1957.

⁵² Board of Foreign Missions *Handbook*, 1960.

⁵³ Documents in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁵⁴ See *Missions in Creative Tension*, edited by Vergil Gerber — papers presented to the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association and Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association at a joint conference at Green Lake, Wisconsin, in 1971.

⁵⁵ Some churches in India have seceded. Several factors contributed to the secession but the mission-church relationship was the least of them. In Colombia the situation was tense for some years; with the leaving of one leader the situation normalized. In Mexico temporary disruptions occurred, but relationships could be restored upon change of national leadership.

⁵⁶ GCR 1960.

⁵⁷ Personal interviews with missionaries and national leaders.

⁵⁸ Personal interviews with J. Oswald Sanders and Arthur Glasser, Overseas Missionary Fellowship leaders.

⁵⁹ Indigenization has been interpreted too exclusively in terms of a Three-self-system: self-support, self-government, self-propagation. Over concern in these areas has resulted in a failure to relate the churches in a positive and constructive manner to culture and society, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

⁶⁰ Board of Foreign Mission *Handbook*, 1959, 1960, 1963.

⁶¹ In 1977 a new handbook was published, spelling out a current philosophy of missions.

⁶² The literature on evangelism on the mission fields is quite extensive, and articles in the Mennonite Brethren periodicals are very numerous. Special emphasis has been made by John H. Voth, J.N.C Hiebert, J.H. Lohrenz of In-

dia; F.J. Wiens of China; Daniel Wirsche of Colombia and Uruguay.

⁶³ Emphasized in the reports of missionary A.A. Unruh of India.

⁶⁴ Personal interviews with national pastors in India, Japan, and Colombia.

⁶⁵ Personal studies in India in 1975.

⁶⁶ Board of Foreign Mission *Handbook*, 1969, 1963.

⁶⁷ GCR 1963; documents in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁶⁸ GCR 1963.

⁶⁹ GCR 1966.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁷² GCR 1966.

⁷³ Recommendation from India, in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁷⁴ GCR 1975.

CHAPTER 4

¹ GCR 1885.

² GCR 1889.

³ GCR 1892.

⁴ GCR 1896.

⁵ GCR 1896.

⁶ GCR 1898.

⁷ *Zionsbote*, April 12, 1899; January, 1900.

⁸ GCR 1900. The Constitution was published in the *Zionsbote*, December 11 and 18, 1901; January 1 and 8, 1902.

⁹ *Zionsbote*, April 19, 1899.

¹⁰ Constitution of 1900, see fn. 8.

¹¹ Personal information from J.F. Harms. Compare with article on Abraham Schellenberg by N.N. Hiebert, *Tabor College Herald*, January 1931.

¹² *Zionsbote*, Sept. 3 and 20, 1899.

¹³ Personal information from J.F. Harms.

¹⁴ Beratung am 12. Oktober, 1895, im Versammlungshause der Krimmer Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde, suedlich von Hillsboro, Kansas.

¹⁵ *Zionsbote*, Sept. 11, 1901.

¹⁶ GCR 1903.

¹⁷ Consider discussion at the conference; compare constitution of 1900 and the suggested revisions.

¹⁸ GCR 1908.

¹⁹ GCR 1909; Constitution of 1900.

²⁰ GCR 1909.

²¹ Charter and Constitution of 1900.

²² GCR 1909.

²³ GCR 1930.

²⁴ GCR 1936.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Constitution of 1936.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ GCR 1951, 1960.

²⁹ GCR 1957; Constitution of 1963.

³⁰ Constitution of 1966.

³¹ GCR 1966, Mandate to Board of Missions and Services.

³² Constitution of 1909.

³³ GCR 1924.

³⁴ GCR 1936; Constitution of 1936.

³⁵ Documents in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; handbooks and guidelines for deputational ministries.

³⁷ Compare reportings in *Zionsbote*, *Christian Leader*, *Mennonitische Rundschau*, and *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. At present the Board employs a full-time secretary for this purpose, and very few articles and reports are written by missionaries.

³⁸ Report by Wheaton College to Evangelical Foreign Missions Association at annual conference in 1976.

³⁹ Personal interviews with missionaries.

⁴⁰ This idea was introduced in the late 1960s and, according to pastors and missionaries, works out well.

⁴¹ Personal interview with N.N. Hiebert.

⁴² On one occasion the missionaries did not approve the missionary candidate to be sent to the field. In several instances missionaries were requested not to be returned to the field. Confidential materials in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁴³ Constitution of 1900.

⁴⁴ Constitution of 1909.

⁴⁵ Constitution of 1936.

⁴⁶ Documents in BOMAS office files.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ GCR 1957.

⁴⁹ GCR 1957.

⁵⁰ Strong reactions were received from India. Documents in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁵¹ GCR 1957. Numerous questions were raised by the delegates. The Conference inquired whether the statement had been presented to the missionaries for reaction and approval. This concern for the missionaries by the brotherhood must be appreciated.

⁵² See reports on the development of the governing Council of India.

⁵³ From correspondence and personal conference with national leadership it is evident that on several fields "partnership" has not been observed too closely, and missions has consequently suffered.

⁵⁴ A.E. Janzen, retired, and J.B. Toews, who went to Fresno, California, serve at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary.

⁵⁵ GCR 1966.

⁵⁶ Personal impressions from conversations with members involved.

⁵⁷ From correspondence and personal interviews with national leaders it is evident that the concept of "partnership" was not understood.

⁵⁸ Study of "Christian Service," a missionary service agency of Minneapolis, Minnesota, from documents in BOMAS office files, Hillsboro, Kansas.

⁵⁹ BOMAS office files.

⁶⁰ Treasurer's Report to the Board.

⁶¹ "Christian Service" report.

⁶² GCR 1972. Report to the Conference by the Board.

⁶³ Office transactions, BOMAS office files.

⁶⁴ Information to the end of this section gathered from various documents in BOMAS office files, unless otherwise noted.

⁶⁵ The program of evangelism has been initiated only in Brazil and Paraguay and there with only meager results.

⁶⁶ Personal interviews in India and Japan, and with representatives from Zaire and Colombia.

⁶⁷ Information from personal surveys.

⁶⁸ Personal interviews with John H. Wiens, F.J. Hiebert, N.N. Hiebert, H.W. Lohrenz.

⁶⁹ See the several editions of the *Handbook*.

⁷⁰ GCR 1896.

⁷¹ Personal interview with N.N. Hiebert. The GCR 1896 states the procedure as follows: "If a brother or sister desires to enter the service of the Master, such individual should express his or her wish to the elder of the church. The elder, in turn, will contact the Board of Missions and introduce such a person. The Board of Missions then is under obligation to ask the local church regarding its members and in such a way obtain the necessary information and recommendation for appointment by the conference."

⁷² GCR 1924.

⁷³ Present practice, according to appointment procedures: See BOMAS files.

⁷⁴ Board *Handbook*, 1959.

⁷⁵ Compare also handbooks for 1959, 1960.

⁷⁶ There was a change of board members and secretariat. A change in policy also becomes evident in correspondence and board minutes.

⁷⁷ GCR 1966.

⁷⁸ In addition to missionaries serving with the Board of Missions and Services, Mennonite Brethren members are serving with the Evangelical Alliance Mission, Sudan Interior Mission, Regions Beyond Mission, Unevangelized Fields Mission, World Evangelization Crusade, Campus Crusade, American Bible Society, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and various home mission agencies.

⁷⁹ Documents in BOMAS office files.

⁸⁰ GCR 1885.

⁸¹ GCR 1936, and documents in BOMAS office files.

⁸² BOMAS office files; interviews with former secretaries.

⁸³ GCR 1936.

⁸⁴ Personal interviews with pastors and donors.

⁸⁵ Personal studies; comments from donors and churches.

⁸⁶ GCR 1927, 1936.

⁸⁷ GCR 1927.

⁸⁸ Present policy: see BOMAS office files.

⁸⁹ See copy of charter as found in Constitution.

⁹⁰ *Zionsbote*, August 8, 1900; GCR 1900.

⁹¹ Constitutions of 1900, 1909, 1936, 1963.

⁹² See conference reports through the years.

⁹³ Consider the numerous articles in the *Zionsbote* in the 1890s and during the first forty years of this century.

⁹⁴ Reports in *Zionsbote*.

⁹⁵ Annual conference reports to the brotherhood; *Zionsbote* reports.

⁹⁶ See debates on the conference floor in 1897, 1909, 1919, 1939, 1943 as recorded in the official minutes.

CHAPTER 5

¹ J.F. Harms, pp. 71-90.

² *Ibid., Mennonite Brethren Church, Winkler, Manitoba.*

³ Personal interviews with C.N. Hiebert and Jacob Lepp.

⁴ J.F. Harms, pp. 136-146.

⁵ See annual reports of Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church in its early history.

⁶ J.F. Harms, pp. 241-254.

⁷ Southern District Conference Reports, 1936, 1937.

⁸ Personal surveys.

⁹ Conference reports of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Canada.

¹⁰ See chapter six, "Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Missions," in this book.

¹¹ *Foreign Missions* (Board of Foreign Missions, December 1948), pamphlet.

¹² Central District Conference Reports, 1960s and 1970s.

¹³ Files of Western Children's Mission, Hepburn, Saskatchewan.

¹⁴ Files of British Columbia and Ontario conferences.

¹⁵ BOMAS office files.

¹⁶ J.F. Harms, pp. 255-263. The author is personally acquainted with all the city missions.

¹⁷ GCR 1879.

¹⁸ GCR 1883.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ GCR 1884.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² GCR 1894.

²³ GCR 1889.

²⁴ GCR 1891.

²⁵ J.F. Harms, p. 283.

²⁶ Beratung, October 1895.

²⁷ GCR 1886.

²⁸ GCR 1887.

²⁹ J.F. Harms, pp. 285-6.

³⁰ GCR 1894; J.F. Harms, p. 286.

³¹ GCR 1895. Escheve, *Die Mission der deutschen Baptisten in Kamerun*. (Kassel: Verlag der Missions-Gesellschaft der deutschen Baptisten), pp. 46-52.

³² GCR 1896.

³³ J.F. Harms, pp. 263-5; also personal information from Harms.

³⁴ *Zionsbote*, Sept. 29, Oct. 6 and 27, Nov. 3, 1897; Jan. 5 and 12, 1898.

³⁵ J.F. Harms, p. 282.

³⁶ Downie, pp. 101-3; personal recollection from N.N. Hiebert.

³⁷ GCR 1877.

³⁸ *Zionsbote*, June 21 and Aug. 25, 1899; J.F. Harms, p. 284.

³⁹ *Zionsbote*, October and November, 1898; GCR 1899.

⁴⁰ *Zionsbote*, Nov. 20, 1900; Jan. 2 and 16, Feb. 27, March 6, 1901.

⁴¹ GCR 1901; J.F. Harms, pp. 294-5.

⁴² GCR 1903; J.F. Harms, p. 294; *Zionsbote*, June 1902; detailed report in Oct. 15 and 22, 1902; Oct. 29 and Nov. 26, 1902; October 1904.

⁴³ GCR 1972, 1975; G.W. Peters, *The Growth of Foreign Missions*, pp. 165-208.

⁴⁴ Documents in BOMAS office files.

⁴⁵ There were several medical doctors, a number of high school teachers, a fair number of seminary-trained ministers and Bible school teachers, a large number of government employees with considerable advanced training, and several scores of graduates of Bethany Bible Institute, Hepburn, Saskatchewan.

⁴⁶ Documents in BOMAS office files.

⁴⁷ Personal surveys on the field.

⁴⁸ Official minutes of the India Mennonite Brethren Church.

⁴⁹ H.C. Bartel, *Mennonite Mission in China* (booklet, 1913), pp. 4-11.

⁵⁰ Numerous articles in the *Zionsbote* by H.C. Bartel in the years following 1901.

⁵¹ GCR 1909.

⁵² BOMAS office files.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ J.F. Wiens, *Fifteen Years among the Hakkas of South China* (no publisher or date), pp. 21, 27-66; *Zionsbote*, Vol. 26, pp. 36, 39, 41-3; Vol. 27, pp. 19, 43, 48.

⁵⁵ Compare discussions on conference floor in 1912, 1915, 1919, 1924.

⁵⁶ GCR 1915.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ GCR 1919.

⁵⁹ BOMAS office files.

⁶⁰ *Zionsbote*, Vol. 43, pp. 21, 23; Vol. 44, p. 36; Vol. 45, pp. 5, 17, 32, 43, 58; Vol. 50, p. 40; Vol. 51, pp. 8, 39.

⁶¹ H.C. Bartel.

⁶² BOMAS office files.

⁶³ GCR 1945.

⁶⁴ BOMAS office files.

⁶⁵ GCR 1948; *Mennonite Brethren Mission in West China* (Board pamphlet, June 1949).

⁶⁶ GCR 1951.

⁶⁷ BOMAS office files.

⁶⁸ The full story of the field in Inner Mongolia is told in A.K. Wiens, *Shadowed by the Great Wall* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1979).

⁶⁹ GCR 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1919.

⁷⁰ *Zionsbote*, Vol. 29, p. 15; Vol. 37, pp. 32, 46; Vol. 39, p. 28.

⁷¹ BOMAS office files.

⁷² *Zionsbote*, Vol. 37, p. 46; Vol. 39, p. 2; Vol. 42, p. 7.

⁷³ GCR 1919.

⁷⁴ GCR 1921, 1924, 1927.

⁷⁵ GCR 1927.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Zionsbote*, Vol. 44, p. 47; Vol. 45, p. 1; Vol. 54, p. 1.

⁷⁸ GCR 1930.

⁷⁹ *Zionsbote*, Vol. 48, p. 12; BOMAS office files.

⁸⁰ *Zionsbote*, Vol. 50, p. 32; Vol. 56, p. 15.

⁸¹ Board greetings, October 1943.

⁸² Personal files of C.J. Funk, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

⁸³ *Afrika Missions Verein*, F.J. Thiessen, secretary, personal files, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

⁸⁴ GCR 1939, 1943.

⁸⁵ BOMAS office files.

⁸⁶ GCR 1939; see also official minutes of North Saskatchewan Provincial Conference, May, 1939.

⁸⁷ GCR 1939.

⁸⁸ GCR 1943.

⁸⁹ *Zionsbote*, Vol. 56, pp. 15-16.

⁹⁰ BOMAS office files.

⁹¹ GCR 1943.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ BOMAS office files.

⁹⁴ Ibid. The full story of mission work in Zaire is given in *The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire*, by J.B. Toews (Hillsboro, Kansas: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978).

⁹⁵ Southern District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches work in South Texas. The full story of mission work in Latin America is given in *The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America*, by J.J. Toews (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975.)

⁹⁶ *Mennonite Brethren Mission to the Paraguay Chaco Indians* (Board pamphlet, Sept. 1948).

⁹⁷ GCR 1943.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ BOMAS office files.

¹⁰⁰ BOMAS office files; *Mennonite Brethren Mission, Colombia* (Board pamphlet, Oct. 1952).

¹⁰¹ *Mennonite Brethren Mission to the Paraguay Chaco Indians* (Board pamphlet, April 1950).

¹⁰² BOMAS office files.

¹⁰³ GCR 1972, 1975.

¹⁰⁴ BOMAS office files.

¹⁰⁵ GCR 1951, 1954, 1957.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ BOMAS office files.

¹⁰⁸ GCR 1954.

¹⁰⁹ BOMAS office files.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ GCR 1948.

¹¹² BOMAS office files.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ GCR 1975.

CHAPTER 6

¹ Unpublished Manuscript by C.F. Plett.

² *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, pp. 243-4. Compare also David V. Wiebe, *Grace Meadow* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1967.)

³ Diary of Jacob A. Wiebe.

⁴ *Konferenzbeschluesse der Krimmer Mennonite Brudergemeinde von Nord Amerika zwischen den Jahren 1882 bis 1940* (hereafter called *Beschluesse*). Material on early development of KMB missions is taken, unless otherwise noted, from the *Beschluesse*.

⁵ *Beschluesse* 1882. Translation by author.

⁶ Abram Friesen visited the U.S. in 1889 and 1899, and preached in the Hillsboro-Gnadenau community. See reports in *Zionsbote*.

⁷ GCR 1960, 1975; *Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference, Missionaries Home and Abroad*. 1869-1960. (Pine Hill Printery, Freeman, South Dakota, 1960).

⁸ H.C. Bartel; see also *Beschluesse*.

⁹ H.C. Bartel.

¹⁰ Personal interviews with missionaries and with N.N. Hiebert, H.W. Lohrenz, F.W. Wiebe, W.W. Harms, A.K. Wiens, Heinrich Epp.

¹¹ *Beschluesse*; personal interview with W.W. Harms.

¹² A.K. Wiens, *The Work of the Mennonite Missions in China* (Unpublished thesis, University of Southern California, June 1951), pp. 121-145.

¹³ Compare the two chapters.

¹⁴ Compare *Beschluesse* 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927.

¹⁵ A.K. Wiens, thesis.

¹⁶ *Mennonite Brethren Mission in West China* (Board of Foreign Missions pamphlet, June 1949); Paulina Foote, *God's Hand Over My Nineteen Years in China* (Hillsboro: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1962); *Missionaries Home and Abroad* op. cit.

¹⁷ Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference reports 1945; personal interviews with C.F. Plett and Sylvester Dirks.

¹⁸ *Missionaries Home and Abroad*.

¹⁹ BOMAS office files.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ W.W. Harms, article in *The Christian Witness*, April 28, 1960.

²² See GCR 1960-1975.

²³ *Beschluesse*; also BOMAS office files.

²⁴ BOMAS office files.

- ²⁵ Mennonite Brethren archives, Hillsboro, Kansas.
- ²⁶ GCR 1896; *Beschluessel* 1897.
- ²⁷ BOMAS office files.
- ²⁸ GCR 1945.
- ²⁹ BOMAS office files.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX C

Resolutions, statutes and correspondence

B.1 — PLAN OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION UNION AND THE MENNONITE BRETHREN OF SOUTH RUSSIA (1904)

Members of the Mennonite churches recommended by the Committee representing these churches for appointment as missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union shall be accepted by the Executive Committee for service in South India, so far as the Committee believes the needs of the work and the resources available to them justify such appointment.

Missionaries so appointed may be designated to any station in South India, but if possible, preference will be given to work in Deccan.

The Reference Committee of the Telugu Mission shall advise and the Executive Committee shall decide as to the total sum to be used in the work of all missionaries appointed under this plan of cooperation.

All accounts received by these missionaries in specific donations from friends in Russia shall be applied first to defraying the cost of the work as thus approved by the Executive Committee. In case such specific donations exceed the total expenditure authorized by the Executive Committee, the excess shall be applied for the defraying of the salaries of the missionaries.

The churches in South Russia will be responsible for all expenditures required for the work of these missionaries, the Missionary Union making no appropriation for this purpose. The churches of South Russia will become responsible for meeting through the treasury of the Union, not less than one half of the amount required for salaries of missionaries serving under this agreement and they will increase the amount thus provided by them as largely as they are able to do so. The Executive Committee of the Union will be responsible for one half the salary of missionaries representing the Mennonite Brethren and will provide a mission residence for these missionaries as for all other missionary workers in the service of the Union.

In case of an appointment of new missionaries one half of the sum required for outfit will be provided as for all other missionary

workers in the service of the Executive Committee and one half by the churches in South Russia. The cost of transportation to the field by both new appointees and missionaries returning to the field will be met by the Mennonite Brethren. The cost of return passage to Russia during furlough of missionaries shall be shared equally. Where funds are needed for buildings other than missionary houses in connection with the work of missionaries serving under this agreement, they may be secured either by appeal to friends in Russia, or elsewhere, or by appropriation by the Executive Committee as may be found most practicable in each case thus arising.

In case of necessity for provision for the needs of an aged missionary, or for a family, left dependent by the decease of a missionary the same consideration shall be given to the need as is extended in similar cases to needs of other missionaries. It is understood that in case provision is made for such need, not less than one half the sum provided shall be given by the churches of South Russia.

In all respects the standing of missionaries serving the Union under this agreement shall be the same as that of other missionaries of the Union, the Executive Committee recognizing these brethren as representing themselves and the full constituency of the Union, as well as their brethren in Russia, in the service thus rendered.¹²

1. Amendment. The churches in South Russia will be responsible for all expenditures required for the direct evangelistic work of these missionaries. This responsibility shall not extend to medical and educational work; it is understood that these forms of work shall be undertaken only by express authorization of the Missionary Union after advisory action by the Reference Committee.

B.2 — STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING FOREIGN MISSION WORK (1943)

With gratitude to God for blessings in past years and in complete dependence on Him for the future, the Board of Foreign Missions submits to the conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America the following statements and recommendations for the continuance of this important ministry, subject to such revisions by the Board as may become necessary by changing conditions and new developments.

I. General Statements and Recommendations

1. **Missionaries on the Fields** — We give due recognition to the faith and courage with which our brethren and sisters have continued at their posts of duty on the various fields in spite of existing

and ever increasing dangers. Our undivided support in intercession and other ways is pledged anew to them and the great cause in which they serve as our representatives. The Conference sends greetings to them in the words expressed by David in Psalm 2:8, "The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his people."

2. Missionaries at Home on Furlough — (A) We approve the return of missionaries who have come home for various reasons, and appreciate the services which they are rendering so willingly and efficiently in our churches.

(b) We hope and pray that it may become possible for all, or at least for some of them, that they can go back and resume the work on their respective fields at an early date. Where this is impossible for various causes, such as the general world conditions, insufficient health of individuals, or obligations to immediate families, we invite these workers to activities here at home until such time when they can return to their stations in the foreign fields.

3. New Missionaries — Realizing the need of strengthening the work on all fields, we shall continue to pray the Lord of the harvest that He send forth more laborers. We invite our young people whom God is calling into this blessed ministry and whom He has prepared with the proper qualifications for the work, that they give first consideration to our own fields, and we assure them that their applications will receive a sympathetic hearing.

4. The Fields — Bearing in mind the words of Jesus. "The field is the world," we would point to the following fields as offering wonderful opportunities. Some have been opened and partly occupied, others are appealing with increasing interest.

(a) The great and productive field in India with more than 1,450,000 people, where whole villages are now turning from heathenism to Christianity.

(b) China. Though Shanghang is still cut off and temporarily inaccessible, the western provinces contain wide areas that are entirely unoccupied by protestant missions.

(c) Africa with the two fields in the Belgian Congo: Kafumba and Bololo with a combined population of nearly half a million.

(d) South America. Although we can not yet direct our young people to a definite field on this great continent, we are asking God for definite guidance if He wished that we enter and occupy a field in that country.

(e) Opportunities in our land, such as the work among the Indians and Mexicans, neglected districts in the great North-west, Jewish and Chinese and centers in our great cities, settlements of people of Russian nationality, etc.

5. Financial Support — God has been very generous in blessing us in material ways as well as "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places in Christ." In response to this we wish to express our gratitude by bringing to Him the thank-offerings that are commensurate with the blessings which we have received. Hence the following remarks and recommendations.

(a) Although some of our missionaries are now at home on furlough, let us remember that our obligations on the fields have not been diminished but rather increased. The small savings in reduced salaries are more than counterbalanced by heavier traveling expenses.

Be it resolved therefore that we encourage our churches, the various organizations within them, and the individual friends to continue their contributions to this work and increase them wherever possible.

The opportunities of entering new fields present additional reasons why we should continue to do our best.

(b) As time goes on, the demands on the "pension treasury," started in 1936, become heavier.

Be it resolved therefore that we remind our churches that this is a permanent part of our foreign mission work, and that we encourage our Sunday schools to contribute regularly one offering each month to this purpose.

(c) We still remember the depression which followed upon the World War of 1914-1918. At that time it became necessary to reduce the modest salary allowances of our missionaries twice ten per cent and the appropriations for the work on the field five percent at one stroke. Even then our treasurer found it impossible on one occasion to send any appropriations for a whole quarter so that the missionaries found it necessary to divide among themselves the few special gifts that had been received.

It is humanly unavoidable that a more serious depression will follow the cessation of present hostilities. We as a Board therefore place before the conference this question: How can we prepare to meet the depression that will certainly come? To us it seems advisable to encourage more liberal giving while we have the means, and to form a sinking fund with the surplus by laying up a reserve and investing it in government securities.

(d) We appreciate the efforts of our missionaries to bring about uniformity of appropriations between the different mission stations on any one field. This is in the interest of sound mission policy.

Be it resolved that we endorse and approve the principles as expressed on this subject in the minutes of our missionaries in India at their 57th missionary conference held at Wanaparty from December 28, 1942, to January 1, 1943.

This resolution is interpreted in the light of the following statements. First, we declare our intention and willingness to sup-

port all stations of any one field, as well as the different fields, with the same liberality according to the recognized needs and our ability. Secondly, we reaffirm our established policy of respecting the expressed wishes of all contributors and will continue to assign all special gifts to the purposes which have been designated. Thirdly, the portions of the specified amounts which are not covered by assigned gifts will be supplied from the general mission treasury. We as a Board believe that the application of these principles is fair to all missionaries and respects the rights and interests of the contributors.

6. Relief Work on Mission Fields — Famine conditions exist today in countries in which our brethren and sisters are engaged in mission work. These will become more severe in the years immediately before us. The sufferings of people of other colors and other languages move us to deep sympathy and produce in us a willingness to send relief. The board wishes to remind the churches that this has always been an integral part of our work, and desires that relief funds intended for sufferers on these mission fields be sent to their destination through our treasury for foreign missions for financial distribution by our own brothers and sisters. This will differentiate clearly between work on the mission fields and work on fields that are entered definitely and primarily for relief purposes.

7. Affiliation of Mission Interests — The problem of affiliation of mission interests presents itself in two distinct phases.

(a) There exists in this country an organization known as the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. One hundred twenty-three mission societies hold membership in it. Affiliation became necessary in 1919 because permission to enter British territories for mission purposes could be obtained only through the Committee of Reference and Counsel, a sub-division of this organization. Our board has not entered into "constitutional" membership but maintains an "affiliated relationship."

The Board recommends that this "affiliation relationship" to the Foreign Mission Conference of North America be continued and that the treasurer be authorized to pay the assessed contributions.

A new organization has just recently been formed which calls itself the National Association of Evangelicals. In its doctrinal position, this will undoubtedly be more sympathetic to our conception of the religious life. It is recommended that we observe developments and that we support the movement without definite affiliation.

Among the services that may be derived through such an organization may be mentioned the following: (1) Representation before the government in matters of passports and visa; (2) assistance in obtaining transportation; (3) advice in making remittance of funds to foreign countries. The organization renders many

other valuable services.

(b) The Board has watched with keen interest the mission activities in our churches. To safeguard these and preserve unity within the churches became a matter of much prayer and thought. Finally a plan was prepared and published under the title, "Principles for the Extension of Mission Work."

The Board recommends that these "Principles" be considered by the Conference and that they be adopted in such form as are thought to be most serviceable. At the same time the Board wishes to express the conviction that any such plan is a concession to human imperfection. It would be more wholesome if the spirit of unity and harmony could rule in our churches so completely that separate organizations would not be thought to be a necessity.

B. 3 — BYLAWS OF THE AMERICAN MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION UNION

(1900 CONSTITUTION)

I

Although the Mennonite Brethren Mission Union has the responsibility to preach the Gospel of Christ to all people, this corporation has the special purpose to bring the Good News to heathen who know nothing of a living God and the redemption through Christ, to help them out of their spiritual misery and, as much as possible, relieve them from their distress.

II

- a. Members of this Mission Union are those who are members of a Mennonite Brethren Church and who support this work with prayer and gifts.
- b. All children of God, even though not members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, may become honorary members if they actively support this work.
- c. All members and honorary members shall consider it their duty to support this mission work with faithful prayer and voluntary contributions.

III

- a. The Mennonite Brethren Mission Union is organized into three parts: i. a Society as a whole; ii. the Administrative Committee;

and iii. the Executive committee.

- b. The Union will meet annually in October during the time of the General Conference, and shall be held at such places as can be agreed upon with the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church.
- c. The right to vote is determined at the annual meetings.

IV

The Board of Directors are:

- a. The Administrative Committee, consisting of 60 persons, including the nine trustees, is elected by the Conference. One-third of these are newly elected at each annual meeting and will serve three years. Not more than half of them may be preachers. This committee has an annual session at the time of the General Conference. However, it may be called for a special meeting should necessary business matters arise. More than half of the Committee members must be present or represented in writing in order to pass resolutions.
- b. The Executive Committee, also elected by the Conference, consists of a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. This Committee works together with the Administrative Committee. One member of this Committee is newly elected each year and then serves three years.
- c. One committee which consists of all missionaries on the mission field.

V

Duties of the Board of Directors:

- a. The Administrative Committee and the Executive Committee have the oversight of the entire mission work, that is the election and sending out of missionaries, the opening of mission stations, allowance of salaries, etc.
- b. The Executive Committee also is responsible for all business transactions, except those which are the responsibility of the Conference or the Administrative Committee.
- c. The Committee consisting of the missionaries is responsible to the Administrative Committee and the Executive Committee and is to support these committees with advice and the carrying out of the resolutions.

VI

- a. The chairman calls and leads the meetings, appoints the

necessary committees; in the absence of the chairman the vice-chairman must do such.

- b. The secretary must record the minutes and enter them into a selected book. He takes care of all correspondence, enters the allotted money for the treasurer, and files the documents of the Corporation.
- c. The treasurer shall receive all money specified for missions, and record it and manage it conscientiously, and upon request from the chairman and secretary, pay it out. He shall be ready to give a financial report at any meeting of the Board of Directors or the Conference.

VII

- a. Contributions for the Fund will be accepted according to the following regulations: If anyone wishes to give a sum it will be sufficient if he or she will give a note with their signature; if a couple, then both are to sign the note. The note may be made to be payable within ten years. The interest, which the giver promises to pay annually, would be at least five percent. Should the giver or givers die, the heirs are obligated to pay the note. Sums less than \$25 will be accepted only in cash and will then be reinvested at a rate of interest. The notes are to be issued in the name of the Corporation. The treasurer is to see to it that only notes that conform to existing law and have reliable insurance are issued. The basic capital of the Fund cannot be spent, but the interest may be used to open new stations, for the erection of new mission buildings, and to pay other costs of the heathen mission. Should it be necessary to use some of the basic fund capital, a vote for every \$25 in the final decision will be necessary.
- b. All land purchased for the erection of mission buildings at newly opened stations of the inland or foreign missions is property of the Corporation, and the property titles are to be made to the name of the Corporation.
- c. All love offerings and collections with no special designation will be used in payment of missionary salaries, based on the resolutions of the Conference and the advice of the Executive Committee.
- d. All contributions given for no specific purpose will be used to pay salaries, as far as it is possible to comply with the giver's request. If, however, for some reason the money cannot be used for that requested purpose, then the giver shall be notified and he may choose another branch of the mission. If he does not do so, the money will go into the general treasury. The general

treasury should be considered first and should be supplied for above all.

VIII

All brothers and sisters who wish to be sent out by Mennonite Brethren Mission Union must be members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, have proved themselves in their life of faith, and must have the necessary education in the German and English languages; they must have physical health and the confidence of their fellow members. To gain the confidence of this Union it is necessary for such brothers and sisters to have been active in the General Conference for at least three years; but if they have already gained the confidence of the General Conference they may be sent out earlier.

IX

When first sent out, a missionary couple will receive \$250 to provide for their necessary equipment; single brethren will receive \$125, and single sisters \$100. The salary of a missionary couple is \$750; of a single brother \$450; of a single sister, \$300. They must provide funds for such things as furniture, medicine, doctor bills, and other own interests.

X

At the regular annual meetings, as well as at meetings called by the Executive Committee, special meetings, and for all voting, resolutions, and elections the simple majority vote shall decide. For resolutions concerning additions and changes of statutes and appendix two-thirds of all present voters are necessary.

XI

Suggestions for changes of statutes or bylaws cannot be voted on during the meeting in which they are first presented. Such suggestions should be made public at least two months before the deciding meeting.

**B.4 — CHARTER OF THE AMERICAN MENNONITE BRETHREN
MISSION UNION (1900)**

Buhler, Reno County, Kansas

The undersigned, citizens of the State of Kansas, do hereby voluntarily associate ourselves together for the purpose of forming a private corporation under the laws of the State of Kansas, and do hereby certify:

FIRST

That the name of this corporation shall be: The American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union.

SECOND

That the purposes for which this corporation is formed are

- A. To bring and to preach through missionaries the gospel to all nations without the gospel of Christ in home and foreign lands.
- B. To relieve the nations from idolatry and sins, to bring them to the obedience of faith in Christ and to fellowship of the Son of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. To employ, send and support the necessary missionaries, assistants and deaconesses according to the rules in the bylaws.
- D. To own real estate, to open mission stations, and to erect, furnish and maintain the necessary buildings.

THIRD

That the place where its business is to be transacted is at Buhler, Reno County, Kansas.

FOURTH

That the term for which this corporation is to exist is ninety-nine years.

FIFTH

That the number of directors of this corporation shall be nine, and the names and residences of those who are appointed for the first year are:

Abraham Schellenberg, Buhler, Reno Co., Kans.

Johann Harms, Hillsboro, Marion Co., Kans.

Franz Ediger, Buhler, Reno Co., Kans.

Johann Foth, Hillsboro, Marion Co., Kans.

John J. Regier, Henderson, York Co., Nebr.

Heinrich Adrian, Parker, Turner Co., S.D.

Heinrich Voth, Bingham Lake, Cottonwood Co., Minnesota

John F. Harms, Medford, Grant Co., Okla.
 Johann Warkentin, Winkler, Manitoba

SIXTH

That the estimated value of the goods, chattels, lands, rights and credits owned by the corporation is fifty thousand dollars.

That the amount of the capital stock of this corporation . . .

SEVENTH

That the names and residences of the stockholders of said corporation, and the number of shares held by each, are as follows, to-wit:

Names	Residences
Abraham Schellenberg	Buhler, Kansas
Johann J. Regier	Henderson, Nebr.
Johann Foth	Hillsboro, Kansas
Peter Regier	North Enid, O.T.
Heinrich Voth	Bingham Lake, Minn.
Franz Ediger	Buhler, Kansas
J.F. Harms	Medford, Oklahoma
John Harms	Hillsboro, Kansas
Heinrich Adrian	Parker, South Dakota
Johann Warkentin	Winkler, Man.
Abraham Richert	Shelly, O.T.
M.M. Just	Isabella, O.T.
Henry Schmidt	Sparta, Kansas
J.S. Foth	Hillsboro, Kansas
Heinrich Delk	Hillsboro, Kansas
Peter Wiens	Bingham Lake, Minn.
Cornelius Neufeld	Charleston, Nebr.
Johann Bese	Parker, S. Dakota
Cornelius Hiebert	Kirk, Colorado
Jacob G. Friesen	Hillsboro, Kansas

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, We have hereunto subscribed our names, this 24th day of October A.D. 1900.

Abraham Schellenberg	Johann Foth	Heinrich Voth
Franz Ediger	John J. Regier	John F. Harms
Johann Harms	Heinrich Adrian	Johann Warkentin

STATE OF KANSAS
 RFENO COUNTRY

Personally appeared before me, a Notary Public in and for Reno

County, Kansas, the above-named Abraham Schellenberg, Franz Ediger, John Harms, Johann Foth, John J. Regier, Heinrich Adrian, Heinrich Voth, John F. Harms, and Johann Warkentin who are personally known to me to be the same persons who executed the foregoing instrument of writing, and duly acknowledged the execution of the same.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my notarial seal, this 24th day of October, A.D. 1900.

A.B. Buhler, Notary Public.

(Seal)

(My commission expires October 13th 1901.)

FILED FOR RECORD, November 20, 1900.

Geo. A. Clark, Secretary of State.

PETITION FOR AMENDMENT OF CHARTER

of

The American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union
of Buhler, Reno County, Kansas
Original field November 20th, 1900

To the State Charter Board, Topeka, Kansas

Mr. C.E. Denton, Secretary

Dear Sir:

We, THE AMERICAN MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION UNION, a corporation, the Directors having subscribed hereto, representing two-thirds of the number of its Board, and certified to by the president and secretary of said Board, respectfully petition The Kansas State Charter Board to Grant the aforesaid Mission Union the hereinafter stipulated changes and amendments to its charter now on file in your office.

The principal reason we offer for this amendment, as herein-after stated and for which we pray, is: That the original charter in its provisions and limitations relates to foreign missions in definite terms, but omits reference to home missions, schools and benevolent institutions, all of which, as we believe and has been decided by our General Conference, should form a part of the mission of the association acting under said charter:

FIRST

That the name of this corporation be: THE CONFERENCE OF THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA.

SECOND

That the purpose for which this corporation is formed be:

A. To preach the gospel in different lands through missionaries

and evangelists.

B. To join and gather together in fellowship of Christ the believers, and to teach and guide them for their protection from evil.

C. The opening and keeping up of benevolent institutions and schools and to publish Christian literature.

D. The sending out and supporting of missionaries, teachers, evangelists and others to labor according to the rules and bylaws of the association.

E. The collection of the necessary funds and money, the receiving of gifts and donations, to own and secure property, land or sites, erect mission stations, schools and such other benevolent institutions, and to support them.

No further changes to original charter required.

Henry Voth, President
N.N. Hiebert, Secretary

D.D. Ediger, Director; Rev. H. Adrian, Director

Johann Foth, Director; Johann Warkentin, Director

J.J. Kliewer, Director; Abr. Richert, Director

State of Minnesota, County of Cottonwood, SS.

Personally appeared before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public, The American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union, a corporation represented by Henry Voth, and attested by Notary.

B.5 — BYLAWS OF 1909 CONSTITUTION MISSION TO THE GENTILES

A. Commission

The Conference has the commission to preach the Gospel to all people, and especially to bring the glad tidings of redemption through Jesus Christ, according to the command of the Lord Jesus (Mark 16:15).

B. Board of Directors

1. The Executive Committee, together with the other directors, has the management of the entire foreign mission work; namely, recommendation and sending out of missionaries, the opening of stations, and the allocation of moneys.
2. A committee consisting of all missionaries on the mission fields shall aid the Administrative Committee with advice and in carrying out resolutions.
3. The Administrative Committee, consisting of sixty brethren, is elected by the Conference. One third of these is elected at each

annual meeting and will serve three years. Not more than half may be preachers. This Committee has the management of the notes given to the mission fund.

C. Mission Treasury

1. The Mission Fund. The stock capital of this Fund cannot be used, but the interest may be used for the opening of new stations, erection of mission buildings, and for the payment of other mission costs. In case of dire necessity the Conference shall decide whether some of the stock capital may be used. Contributions for the Fund will be accepted according to the following stipulations: If someone wishes to donate a sum, it will suffice if he or she will give a note, properly signed. If a couple, both sign. The note may be made to be payable within ten years. The interest which the donor promises to give shall be at least five percent. Should the Giver die, then the heirs are to pay the note. Sums of less than \$25 will be accepted in cash only, then will be loaned with interest. Notes should be made out to the name of the Conference.
2. General Treasury. All love offerings and collections with no other designation will be used to pay the salaries of missionaries and to cover other mission expenses according to the resolution of the Conference and the consent of the directors.
3. Special Treasury. All gifts given by the donors for special purposes will be used, if possible, according to the wishes of the donors. If, however, for some reason the gifts cannot be used as designated, then the donor is to be so informed and he may appropriate them for another purpose. If the latter is not done, then these gifts will flow into the general mission treasury. The general treasury should be favored at all times.
4. Lands. All lands necessary and purchased for the erection of mission stations inland and in foreign countries are the property of this Corporation and the ownership titles are to be in the name of the Corporation.

D. Missionaries

1. Reception and Sending Out. All brothers and sisters wishing to be sent out by the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America must be members of the Mennonite Brethren Church; must have proven themselves in their faith-life; must have a good report in their home congregation; must have a recommendation from the same; further, they must have the necessary physical health, as well as the required education in the English and German languages. To gain the necessary confidence of the General Conference, it would be

well that such workers had served with success for three years in the Conference. However, if they have gained this confidence they may be sent out sooner.

2. Support. A couple sent to the foreign country receives \$250 for outfitting, a single person \$125. The annual salary of a couple is \$800, that of a single person \$400. After they have been in India for three years, they receive an additional \$50 per person. The salary of missionaries and evangelists in America is \$500 for a couple and \$350 for a single brother. Travel expenses are not included.
3. Term of Service. Under ordinary circumstances, that is if sickness does not hinder, the Conference expects the missionaries to serve seven or eight years, after which they are permitted a vacation trip.
4. Salary of Missionaries while on vacation at home. The salary of a couple while on vacation is \$600, that of a single person \$300.
5. Dismissal. Should mission workers come into a situation not brought on by themselves where it is necessary to dismiss them, the Conference will be responsible for their support for two years after their dismissal. In special cases the Conference will continue support in keeping with the principles of Christian love.
6. Reports. Missionaries shall send an annual report on finances and the work to the Executive Committee, and a quarterly report of the work to the editor of the *Zionsbote*.

B. 6 — BY-LAWS — ARTICLE XI: FOREIGN MISSIONS (1936 CONSTITUTION

Section 1. The Aim. The Conference recognizes it as its duty to preach the gospel to the nations and especially to bring the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to the heathen in accordance with the commission of Jesus: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

Section 2. The Managing Committee. The responsibility of directing the foreign mission work rests with the Board of Foreign Missions and the committee consisting of the missionaries that are in active service, and is subject to the specifications contained in this article and the resolutions of the Conference.

Section 3. The Board of Foreign Missions.

Clause 1. Election, Term of Office and Organization. The Board consists of five members elected by the Conference at a regular session for one term of approximately three years. The organization provides for a chairman, a vice chairman, a secretary, an assistant

secretary, and a treasurer.

Clause 2. Duties of the Board

(a) The Board of Foreign Missions has full control over all foreign mission work. It submits to the Conference, or to the churches, the recommendations for the acceptance of new missionaries, decides in all questions concerning the sending of missionaries and the opening of new stations, and provides that the received mission funds are appropriated equitably.

(b) Before each convention of the Conference the Board prepares a budget covering the ensuing year. This is then recommended to the Conference for examination and eventual acceptance and serves as a basis for the appropriation of mission funds. In those years when the Conference is not in session, the Board revises the budget and makes such changes as have become necessary by new deeds or changed conditions. However, the Board is obligated to carry out the provisions of the budget only so far as the receipts of mission funds make this possible.

(c) In times of extreme need the Board may ask for money out of the mission endowment fund as provided for in Article X, Section 2, Clause 2. Use is to be made of this provision mainly in cases when the safety of the missionaries is in danger or when depressions set in that would imperil the continuation of the work.

(d) The Board is charged especially with the duty of stimulating the interest in foreign missions and of advancing the work in every way. It endeavors to do this by publishing reports on the condition of the work quarterly or oftener, and by sending to the missionaries on the field encouraging communications from the homeland.

(e) The Board is expected to meet in regular session at least twice a year for detailed consultation concerning the needs of the work. The traveling expenses caused thereby are to be paid out of the mission treasury.

Clause 3. The Duties of the Separate Officers.

(a) The chairman performs the customary duties of the office. He presides at the meetings of the Board, and provides for the appropriate representation of the mission work at the conventions of the Conference. If it is impossible for him to perform his duties the vice chairman takes his place.

(b) The secretary keeps the minutes of all sessions and takes care of the official correspondence. He shall preserve both the minutes and all official correspondence for which purpose the Board is instructed to provide the necessary accommodations. Furthermore, the secretary prepares quarterly reports on the existing conditions of the work and submits them for publication. It is primarily his duty to encourage and strengthen the missionaries by frequent communications from the homeland. The assistant secretary finds his

chief duty in the help that he can give during the sessions of the Board by aiding in recording the proceedings of the meeting.

(c) The treasurer is authorized to receive all funds that are given for mission work, and is required to issue receipts for the same and to administer these funds conscientiously. He makes all payments in accordance with the specifications of the Conference or of the Board and on the basis of the officially accepted budget. Accounts, for the payment of which provision has not been made in the manner prescribed above, must first be approved by the chairman and the secretary. He shall keep himself prepared to report in detail on the condition of the treasury at any meeting of the Board or the Conference and to produce the cash that is in the treasury. In order to facilitate the receiving and transmitting of the contributions for mission work from distant churches, the Board may appoint assistant treasurers as conditions may require. These need not be members of the Board.

Section 4. The Committees of Missionaries.

(a) The missionaries that serve on any specific field (including both men and women) are considered to be a committee that participates in the management of the mission work by submitting its recommendations. Thus every field is represented.

(b) The organization of the work on the field is left to the respective missionaries. Likewise the arranging of all local affairs of their fields rests in their hands. But they should always endeavor to obtain uniform procedures in all mission work.

(c) These committees of missionaries direct to the Board of Foreign Missions their recommendations for the work in their respective fields and give detailed information concerning the needs and the conditions. Provisions for the work are then made as far as possible on the basis of these recommendations and reports.

Section 5. The Treasuries for Foreign Missions.

Clause 1. The Mission Endowment Fund. The regulations for this fund are contained in Article X, Section 2.

Clause 2. The Mission Treasury.

(a) Income into this treasury is being sought from the following sources: mission offerings in churches, Sunday schools, young people's societies, and other organizations in the churches; mission offerings at harvest and mission festivals; contributions given by God's children as expressions of gratitude to the Lord; interest from the mission endowment fund, and rents from mission farms and other properties. All gifts designated in general terms for mission work flow into this treasury.

(b) Mission money that flows into this treasury is used to spread the gospel among the heathen. Missionaries are sent out and are supported by it, mission buildings are erected and the various branches

of mission work are supported, such as evangelization through native preachers and Bible women, schools at the stations and in villages, nursing the sick in hospitals and in the villages.

Clause 3. The Treasury for Assigned Gifts.

(a) All gifts that are designated for a certain field or some specific purpose are remitted according to the wishes of the donors. However, if for some unavoidable reason they cannot be sent to the designated field, it is to be reported to the donors so that they can reassign them to other mission purposes. If no specific designation is then given, these gifts flow into the regular mission treasury.

(b) Mission money given to the support of native preachers, Bible women, etc., in the fields for which the Conference has become responsible is considered to supplement wherever the income of the regular mission treasury is insufficient to satisfy all needs.

Section 6. Missionaries.

Clause 1. Accepting and Sending Missionaries. All brethren and sisters that wish to be sent by the Conference must be members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, have been found approved in their spiritual life, be in good standing in their home church and obtain from the same a recommendation for service in foreign mission work. Furthermore they must be in good bodily health and possess the necessary education and training. In order to gain the confidence of the Conference it is desirable that such workers have been active in the churches for a period of three years; but if they possess this confidence they may be sent earlier.

Clause 2. Support.

(a) Each married couple receives a certain amount for equipment when they are sent to the field the first time; single persons receive one half of the amount. In addition to this they are allowed something the first year toward extra expenses connected with the study of the language.

(b) The annual salaries of the missionaries, both for the time of active service and that spent at home on furlough, are stipulated by the Conference with due consideration of conditions as they exist at home and on the fields. But whenever special cases occur or hard times arise, it shall be the right and duty of the Board of Foreign Missions to make such provision that the work can be carried on till the next convention of the Conference.

Clause 3. Terms of Service and Furloughs.

(a) Under ordinary conditions, i.e., when not prevented by sickness, the Conference expects that missionaries are in active work for a period of seven or eight years. After this a furlough is granted.

(b) After the first term of service a furlough of from twelve to eighteen months is granted with salary; after the second or any later term the furlough may be a little longer, but should not exceed a

period of three years.

Clause 4. Providing for the Children.

(a) The Conference assists the missionaries in the care of their children, by making special allowances for their support until they have reached the age of eighteen years.

(b) Whenever children attain the age in which they cannot be taken into the field without serious loss, the return of the missionaries into active mission work is expected only when they can make arrangements for their supervision and care during the time of their absence.

Clause 5. Retiring From Active Mission Service.

(a) When missionaries who have been approved in the work, receive the conviction from the Lord that they should enter into other work or serve on some other mission field, they may withdraw with the consent of the Board. The Conference is thereby absolved from any further obligations.

(b) Should the conditions so shape themselves that the Conference cannot retain all mission workers in active service, the Conference obligates itself to provide for such mission workers after their release as provided for their support during times of furlough, i.e., eighteen months when the release comes after one term of service and three years if it comes after the second or a later term.

(c) The Conference endeavors to provide for those missionaries who have spent their whole strength in mission service by the purchase or erection of one or more mission homes. It also requests the home churches to provide for the support of the mission workers who belong to them and reside in their midst, for they receive many blessings through the presence and service of such workers. The Conference is willing to do in every case what Christian love demands.

Clause 6. Reports. The missionaries as a committee on their field shall report semi-annually to the Board on the finances and the work together with recommendations for providing for the mission work. Aside from this it is desired that all missionaries report frequently on their work and if possible, send quarterly reports to the editor of the *Zionsbote* for publication.

B.7 — TESTIMONY OF J.H. PANKRATZ (1901)

So far as we personally were concerned. I say "we" because my companion, my dear wife, was always with me, we were willing to serve in the vineyard of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, wherever He had an open door for us. We had confessed to each other that we had promised the Master to go to the foreign mission field if He would open a door for entrance into that service. At the time of the events just referred to we had been doing evangelistic work for a few years in our churches.

At times we had felt the gracious blessings of God in the work and His strengthening help in our weakness and so we had begun to like the part of labor that the dear Lord had assigned to us; yet we were deeply interested in the foreign mission work of our Conference. We sincerely sympathized with Reverend and Mrs. Hiebert in their suffering.

The time for the conference to meet in the fall of 1901 at Bingham Lake, Minn., was drawing nearer, and with it the question concerning the mission work in India. We were informed that Brother D.F. Bergthold would be there and would be considered for mission service in India. Soon the Board of Foreign Missions put the question to us if we would feel it as a call from God if the Conference should ask us to go to India and take up work which had been interrupted by the coming of Reverend and Mrs. Hiebert. This caused a searching examination of our hearts, but Scripture passages such as Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49, and some in Acts, led us to the conviction that if the Conference should call us to go to India for mission work there, we would accept it as a call from the Lord Jesus through the voice of the Conference to enter the service on the foreign mission field. It is still vividly in my heart, soul, and mind how the question was asked by the Conference, if we would be willing to go as sent by the Lord Jesus to the mission field in India if the Conference asked us to do so, and I accept it as from God. Then I stepped out of the conference room in order to make possible a more free discussion about our fitness. I went and threw myself upon the ground behind a hedge, praying to the Saviour Christ Jesus to let us go only if we were fit in His sight. When I had been called back to the conference session we were informed that we had been accepted for the mission work in India. Then there seemed to be a hush of devotion when prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for divine guidance went up to the Throne of Grace. One still feels the deep touch in the heart and the stir of God's Spirit in those gripping prayers. Many a time they have been an encouragement in hours of trial in the work on the field. Thanks to God for them.

B. 8 CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN MENNOITE BRETHREN MISSION CONFERENCE, INDIA.

I. The Name

This Corporation shall be known as "The Mission Conference of the American Mennonite Brethren Mission."

II. The Purpose of this Conference

That we as workers on the mission field strengthen, encourage and edify each other by relating our experiences in the work, but mainly by studying God's Word and uniting in prayer.

That we present questions and problems of the work for general disussion to find ways and means to carry on the work entrusted to us in a uniform manner.

That we keep our mission board at home informed of the needs and difficulties and aid them with suggestions and advice.

III. The Members of this Conference

All brethren and sisters, recognized by the General Conference as workers, also all workers who have received the confidence and consent of the General Conference, are members of this Conference.

Like-minded missionaries of other denominations and friends of our missionaries may take part in our devotional meetings if they so desire.

IV. The Conference Meetings

There shall be two regular sessions within a conference year, one at the beginning of the year, the other in the month of June or July.

V. The Officers

Chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, and helper.

VI. The Duties

That this Conference may be able to aid the Board of Missions in an advisory capacity.

That it may participate in a practical way in the life of the Mission. The Conference is to organize as follows:

(a) an executive committee and (b) other committees according to possibility and need, namely hospital committee, school committee, building committee, etc.

VII. Relationships of the Conference

To represent the position taken by this association responsible to missionaries to the Board of Missions.

The individual members of this conference will comply with decisions insofar as they are in accord with the positions taken by our Conference and the method of our work.

Although every member has the privilege to write personal letters to the Board at home and present personal viewpoints and give information, it is expected that nothing contrary to the resolutions

of the Conference will be submitted. One exception could be if the member in question had openly objected to the resolution on the floor of the Conference.

2. Additional Notes

1. The Order at Conference Sessions

That whenever possible we allow time for general edification by beginning with God's Word and prayer before the business sessions.

That the manner in which these devotional periods are to be conducted be left to each station where the Conference meets, or according to arrangements made at the current session.

That we as a Conference conduct business according to customary rules of procedure whenever it is difficult to reach a decision, but that in general we will not be tied down to them, but leave room for brotherly conviction and the Holy Spirit.

That we resist injecting personal problems or discussions, but focus on those issues which would add to the general good.

II. Election and term of service of officers

That election of officers be by ballot, and that majority vote decide the election.

That officers be elected only for one conference year.

III. Duties of Officers

That the chairman or someone he delegates open all sessions with a Word of God and prayer.

That he sign all public documents after he has examined them.

That the vice-chairman lead the session in the absence of the chairman, or when other reasons require this.

That the secretary, with the aid of the assistant-secretary, record the minutes, and at the beginning of every session read them; that he enter the accepted minutes into a book for this purpose; that he make copies of these minutes, signed by the chairman and secretary, and send them to the Board of Missions; that he sign all documents which are to be made public; that all official correspondence be taken care of by him; that he present all mission board correspondence at the Conference or send copies to missionaries by mail if it is urgent.

The treasurer is to receive all mission money sent in. He is to record and deposit it in a recommended bank, disbursing them to the missionaries according to the instructions from the treasurer in America or from the Conference. Should he receive letters intended for all missionaries on the field from the general treasurer, he should submit them to them.

IV. The Administrative Committee

This Committee should, when necessary, meet twice each conference year as called by the chairman. If necessary, the chairman

may call additional meetings, but whenever, possible such special matters should be taken care of by correspondence.

All questions and problems that the individual missionaries may have during the conference year, and, for which they seek advice and suggestions, should be presented to this Committee for quick disposition.

The chairman may invite other members of the Conference, especially those who work on problems that are similar and may be affected, for consultation.

V. Missionaries going on Furlough and Returning

That the Conference supply a substitute when a station becomes vacant in consultation with missionaries being considered. They should also be concerned that returning missionaries get back into the work as soon as possible. Should these questions need to be solved before or after our regular session, then the Administrative Committee, together with the missionaries, will make the necessary arrangements until the time of the Conference.

VI. Harmonious Relationship

That we as a Missions Conference make it our responsibility to work in harmony on the various stations, particularly in respect to the salaries of the employed nationals such as the leaders of the congregation, evangelists, school teachers, workers in the hospitals, Bible women, etc.

That the appointment and dismissal of new workers be the responsibility of the individual missionary.

That travel arrangements, including furlough, will be left to the individual missionaries.

VII. Conference Year and Reports

That our Conference year end with the last day of the month of June, that we report our financial account both in Rupees and dollars, and these be accompanied by a report to the Board of Missions in America.

That we as individual missionaries publicize material which may be of interest to the work in India in available papers and through other possible methods.

B. 9 — DRAFT FOR A PROPOSED CONSTITUTION OF THE FIELD COUNCIL OF THE ANDHRA MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH AND THE AMERICAN MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION**I. NAME**

The name of this organization shall be: "The Field Council of the Andhra Mennonite Brethren Church and the American Mennonite Brethren Mission."

II PURPOSE

The Purpose in establishing this Field Council shall be:

1. To maintain close relationship between the Church and the Mission.
2. To strengthen the Church in its organization as well as in its spiritual life.
3. To encourage and guide the members of the Church in a Study of the Word of God, in Christian Fellowship, and in a Holy Walk.
4. To assist the Local Churches, the Field Association, and the Convention of the Andhra M.B. Church in all the phases of Christian Work, which we unitedly endeavour to do for our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL

This Field Council shall be composed of fourteen members, representing the following:

1. Eight members shall be from the eight Field Associations, one from each.
2. Six members shall be from the American Mennonite Brethren Mission.

These members are elected annually. Those representing the Field Associations are elected by their respective Association at its first regular meeting of the year. Those from the Mission are elected by the Missionary Conference at its first session of the year.

IV. MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

1. A regular meeting of the Field Council is to be held once in the year. At this meeting the organization of the Council is effected for the year. The officers arrange time and place for this meeting.
2. Special meetings of the Council may be called when the officers deem it available.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNCIL

1. The Council elects the following officers: Chairman, Assistant Chairman, Two Secretaries, and a Treasurer.
2. The Duties of these officers are those usually delegated to officers of an organization.

- a. The chairman calls the meetings, calls the sessions to order, and presides at the same.
- b. The Assistant Chairman takes the place of the chairman when the chairman is unable to be present or unable to do the work.
- c. One of the Secretaries is to be from the Andhra M.B. Church. He records the minutes in the Telugu language and carries on such official correspondence which is to be done in the Telugu language.

The other Secretary, who is one of the members from the Mission, records the minutes in the English language and carries on such official correspondence where the English language is properly employed.

- d. The Treasurer receives all the funds of the Council, keeps accounts of the same, keeps them on deposit at a place approved by the Council, and makes such payments which are authorized by the Council.

VI. ITEMS OF BUSINESS TO BE TAKEN UP BY THE COUNCIL

This Field Council may take up at its meetings the following points of business for deliberation and disposal:

1. Those items which are submitted by any one of the Field Associations affiliated with the Council.
2. Those items which are submitted by any duly organized Local A.M.B. Church and its Field Association.
3. Those items which are submitted by the Andhra M.B. Convention.
4. Those items which are submitted by the A.M.B. Missionary Conference in India.
5. Those items which the Council itself deems advisable to take up for consideration.
6. An individual wishing to present to the Council any matter for consideration must submit this through the channel of his local church and his Field Association.

VII. THE WORKING OF THIS COUNCIL

1. This Field Council shall begin to function and organize itself as soon as the A.M.B. Missionary Conference and at least Five Field Associations have accepted this Constitution and have elected members for the same.
2. The Telugu language shall be the medium of discussion at all the meetings, though the minutes are written in both the Telugu and English language.
3. A Quorum at a regular or special meeting requires the presence of at least five of the members elected by the Field Associations and at least three members elected by the Missionary Conference.

4. Amendments to this Constitution and Changes in the same can only be made by a two-thirds vote of the Council at its regular meeting and the approval of at least five Field Associations and of the Missionary Conference.

B. 10 — PRINCIPLES FOR THE EXTENSION OF MISSION WORK

(As approved by the Board of Foreign Missions, September 15, 1942, for recommendation to the Conference.)

Section 1. Purpose and Aim.

Clause 1. General Statement. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). This Great Commission of our Lord Jesus has been the inspiration of His church throughout the centuries in every sincere effort to spread the light of the gospel. That this may continue to be the controlling passion of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America and become such in an even larger measure is the Purpose and Aim of these Principles for the Extension of Mission Work.

Clause 2. There exists within the Mennonite Brethren Church much interest in mission work which cannot be utilized to its fullest extent nor directed most effectively without more definite organization. It is the specific purpose of these Principles to provide for the organization of these interests and their correlation with the Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.

Clause 3. Present trends under the coercion of existing world conditions tend toward greater union of efforts for the extension of God's Kingdom here on earth. The hope is entertained that these Principles may also serve to lead to closer affiliation of such churches, mission societies, and other similar bodies that are closely related by their faith, practice, and history.

Section 2. Organization and Method of Operation.

Clause 1. Separate mission societies in the sense and nature of these Principles should be organized within the Mennonite Brethren Church only when there is a pressing need that cannot be met effectively otherwise and the interest is sufficiently stable and widespread that its successful operation can be expected to continue over a reasonable period of time. The restrictive phase of this clause does not apply to the formation of mission societies within the local churches for prayer, mission study, the raising of funds, and like purposes.

Clause 2. Mission societies that are organized for the purpose of supporting work on some definite mission field may apply to the

Board of Foreign Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America for affiliation with the same in its work. Upon gaining the necessary mutual understanding and formulating the agreement, the work is to be transacted in harmony with the provisions laid down in the following clauses for these Principles.

Clause 3. At least once a year these affiliated societies are invited to meet jointly with the Board of Foreign Missions for the purpose of considering the need of the work and of making the necessary provision for its maintenance through another year. The time and place of such meetings as well as the number of representative delegates are to be arranged by mutual agreement. Conversely, these affiliated societies invite the Board of Foreign Missions to be represented at least once a year. It is understood that each society takes care of the travelling expenses of their representatives, unless other provisions are made.

Clause 4. It shall be the purpose of these joint meetings to study the needs of the various fields, try to find ways and means of meeting these needs and make provision for the maintenance and possible expansion of the work in all its phases. In order to accomplish this, it is expected that detailed and complete reports be prepared and submitted to the joint session, and that all deliberations be carried on in openness and full mutual confidence. After these joint sessions each co-operating body has the right to meet in executive session.

Section 3. Missionaries.

Clause 1. The affiliated societies through their committees or boards are enjoined to use the utmost care to accept and send out as missionaries only persons that meet the general requirements which are approved by the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America in so far as they apply to the purpose of these principles. Article XI, Section 6. Clause 1 in the "Constitution and Bylaws" contains a list of these qualifications, and of them the following apply to the present purpose. It is expected of all candidates for mission work that they (a) have been found approved in their spiritual life, (b) be in good standing in their home church, (c) obtain from their home church a recommendation for the mission work in which they wish to engage, (d) be in good bodily health, and (e) possess the necessary education and training.

It is recognized that no list of qualifications can cover all cases; variations and exceptions may be made with respect to the individual candidates and also in regard to the different fields of service. The responsible governing body (the committee or board of the mission society) has the right to pass on the application. Some of the large mission societies from the many years of extensive experience

especially in tropical countries include the following points in their standards. These may serve as a guide even when they cannot be applied as an ironclad rule.

(a) Age limit. 24 to 30 years is considered by most mission societies as the age for the acquisition of a new language.

(b) Health. Only those candidates should be accepted for service in foreign fields who pass a thorough medical examination.

(c) Education. Some will need specialized training, but all should have a good knowledge of the Bible. Special training will be required for those who wish to serve as doctors, nurses, teachers. One needs to remember that the best is not too good on the mission field. Of a missionary who has charge of a station it is not expected too much that he have acquired a college education and completed a theological course.

(d) Experience. It is well that the candidates have at least one year's experience in the homeland in lines of service similar to those in which they expect to engage on the mission field. Originally our brethren required three years. During this time the candidate should give evidence of efficiency and tact and love for souls (2 Cor. 5:14a).

(e) Character. High ideals in social and business relations, common sense in dealing with others, steadiness of purpose, ability to work harmoniously with others, cheerfulness of spirit, absolute adherence to the path of virtue — these are qualities that every missionary must cultivate.

(f) Family Relations. The mission fields offer fine opportunities to single ladies. Some boards do not hesitate to send single men; but in most cases it is best that they marry before they go to a foreign field. Children in the home of a missionary are not considered a hindrance; but when the family has become large, and especially when some of the children are of school age, parents need to consider seriously whether their first duty does not tie them to the homeland where they can give more adequate care to the precious young souls that God has entrusted to them.

(g) Financial Obligations. The vocation of the missionary calls for heavy sacrifices and seldom offers abundant rewards in monetary values. It is therefore highly desirable that the new missionary discharge all of his financial obligations before entrance upon the work. It will be hard to pay debts with savings from a missionary's modest salary. Moreover, to have found ways and means to liquidate one's own obligations is one of the finest recommendations that a young person can have.

(h) The Call From God. This is of the highest importance, and every candidate should be clear on this point. It is a subjective qualification of which the person alone can speak with certainty. But one needs to remember that this subjective call will be corroborated

by qualities listed above. When the Holy Spirit called for the separation of Barnabas and Saul, the call found a ready response by their associates and the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

Clause 2. All affiliated mission societies, including their governing mission bodies (committees or boards) and missionaries, pledge themselves to work harmoniously with the Board of Foreign Missions toward the end that perfect unity is maintained in the churches at home and that the work on the various mission fields is likewise carried on in the same spirit of unity, especially in regard to the theological teaching and the founding and organizing of churches.

Clause 3. It will be possible that members of denominations other than the Mennonite Brethren work upon these mission fields, provided they observe the principles announced above, adhere to the approved teaching of scriptural truths, and the churches which they represent contribute a reasonable share of their support.

Section 4. Support and Administration of Funds.

Clause 1. Each affiliated mission society has the right to maintain its own treasury and administer its funds. However, it shall always be the policy of the treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions to give such assistance as may be desired and is within his means. If desired, funds may be transmitted through the Board's treasury.

Clause 2. Contributions to the work of the affiliated mission societies may be solicited from those sources and in ways and means found to be fair and adequate by agreement with the Board of Foreign Missions. First in line would be member churches of the Mennonite Brethren Conference. The church paper *Zionsbote* and other periodicals as well as deputation work would be considered proper means for the purposes of publicity in order to lay the needs of any particular field before the people. In this solicitation for funds great care should be exercised to avoid all repression of rightful interests of those concerned. Member churches of the Mennonite Brethren Conference should not forget that their first duty is toward those missions for which the Conference has assumed all responsibility.

Clause 3. On the occasion of the joint session with the representatives of the affiliated mission societies, the Board of Foreign Missions prepares a budget for the work on all fields concerned covering the needs of the following year. A reasonable share of these appropriations may be taken from the general mission treasury; however, all funds that are specified for any particular field must be reserved for it and used for their designated purpose. If for any reason and at any time the funds in the general mission treasury are insufficient to cover the appropriations, all fields share pro rata according to the accepted budget.

Section 5. Legal Protection.

Clause 1. All misison societies affiliated according to these Prin-

ciples may register their mission stations as missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, and the Conference shall give such protection as may be within its means.

Clause 2. The registration herein provided for shall not restrict any mission society to administer the internal affairs of said missions; neither shall it absolve them from any obligation which they may have assumed by entrance upon such affiliation.

B. 11 — SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MB-KMB MERGER (1960)

The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church of North America had its beginning in the village of Annafeld, Crimea, Russia, on September 21, 1869, as a group of 19 persons, with Jacob A. Wiebe (1839-1921) as their leader and elder. Through a spontaneous religious revival most of the families in the village had begun to seek a more earnest Christian life and had experienced conversion. The group chose the name "Bruedergemeinde" but was soon called "Krimmer Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde" to distinguish it from the "Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde" founded in the Molotschna in 1860. Each had originated separately and independently of each other, yet both arose from the same general revival with a similar faith and purpose. The act of rebaptism constituted in effect a withdrawal of the newly formed K.M.B. group from the Kleine Gemeinde, with which Wiebe had some connections. Much of the ultra-conservative spirit of the Kleine Gemeinde was transmitted into the K.M.B. group, in combination with the new emphasis on conversion, assurance and experience.

The new group grew slowly and when in 1874 they left for the United States of America they numbered about forty members; all except three families emigrated, settling in Marion County, Kansas.

From the beginning the K.M.B. have had an active interest in home and foreign missions. On October 5, 1901, the K.M.B. Church was first chartered as "The Mission Board of the K.M.B. Church," with headquarters at Hillsboro, Kansas. On July 6, 1917, they were incorporated as the "Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church of North America" in the State of Kansas. Through evangelistic efforts of the settlers at Gnadenau, the first congregation, other settlements were reached and churches were organized in time in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Arkansas, and in Canada.

The first misison station was founded among the Negro people in North Carolina and Tennessee in 1900. In 1901 the H.C. Bartels went to China to the Shantung and Honan Provinces. In 1922 a field was

opened in Mongolia, and the work in Peru among the Campa and Spanish-speaking Indians was opened in 1946.

Since our forefathers came to America, the Mennonite Brethren and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conferences have sought a closer fellowship. There has always existed a brotherly working relationship and a recognition of each other as sister conferences for which we are grateful. Repeated and various moves toward merger have been made, sometimes they were quite strong, sometimes not so strong. Various overtures toward merger have been made by the Mennonite Brethren and discussed in both conferences, even in early days.

The past decade has been fraught with earnest deliberations, prayer and seeking after the leading of the Lord. The fear of sidestepping a challenge once begun by our forefathers, a lack of oneness of mind on the merger issue, and the problems of a smaller conference involving its missions and program presented real problems. But by patience, persistence and continued negotiations these matters have been solved by the grace of the Lord. In 1956 important agreements were reached by the K.M.B. Merger Committee and the M.B. Board of Reference and Counsel, and later approved by the K.M.B. Conference delegates. On October 8, 1957, the churches of the K.M.B. Conference voted by a two-thirds majority to merge with the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Steps toward merger were approved in 1958 and 1959, and in 1960 definite plans of merger on General Conference and district level were ratified by the K.M.B. delegates.

**B. 12 — CHARTER OF THE KRIMMER MENNONITE BRETHREN
CHURCH WITH MISSIONS PROPOSAL**

STATE OF KANSAS

Department of State

J.T. BOTKIN, Secretary of State

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greetings!

I, J.T. Botkin, Secretary of State of the State of Kansas, do hereby certify that the following and hereto attached is a true copy of the Charter of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, the original of which is now on file and a matter of record in this office.

In testimony whereof I have hereto set my hand and caused to be affixed my seal.

Done in the City of Topeka, this 16th day of July A.D., 1917.

J.T. Botkin, Secretary of State.

By E.A. Cornell.

CHARTER

The undersigned, citizens of the state of Kansas, do hereby voluntarily associate ourselves together for the purpose of forming a private corporation under the law of the State of Kansas, and do hereby certify:

First

That the name of this corporation shall be, "The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church of North America."

Second

That this corporation is not organized for profit and that the purposes for which it is formed are: to promote the interests of religion in our midst and abroad, and the spread of scriptural holiness throughout the community.

Third

That the place where its business is to be transacted is at Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas.

Fourth

That the term for which this corporation is to exist is Fifty Years.

Fifth

That the number of Directors of this Corporation shall be Five (5) and the names and residences of those who are appointed for the first year are:

John Esau, Inman, Kansas

Cornelius Thiessen, Inman, Kansas

Peter A. Wiebe, Lehigh, Kansas

John J. Friesen, Hillsboro, Kansas

David E. Harder, Hillsboro, Kansas

Sixth

That the estimated value of the goods chattels, lands, rights and credits owned by the corporation is Dollars.

That the amount of the capital stock of this corporation shall be Dollars and shall be divided into None shares, of none dollars each.

Seventh

That the names and the residences of the stock-holders of said corporation, and the number of shares held by each are as follows, to wit: None.

In testimony whereof, we have hereunto subscribed our names, this 14th day of May A.D. 1917.

John Esau

Cornelius Thiessen

Peter A. Wiebe

John J. Friesen.

David E. Harder

State of Kansas. Marion County.

Personally appeared before me, a notary Public in and for Marion County, Kansas, the above-named John Esau, Cornelius Thiessen, Peter A. Wiebe, John J. Friesen and David E. Harder.

Who are personally known to me to be the same persons who executed the foregoing instrument of writing and duly acknowledged the execution of the same.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto affixed my seal and subscribed my name this 14th day of May A.D. 1917.

P.F. Friesen,
Notary Public.

My commission expires April 24, 1919.

OFFICE OF THE STATE

Received of the KRIMMER MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH of N.A. and deposited in the State Treasury, fees on this Charter as follows:

Application fee

July 12, 1917 Filing and Recording

fee \$2.50

Capitalization fee

J.T. Botkin, Secretary of State,
By E. Kille
Chief Clerk

Filed July 12, 1917,

J.T. Botkin,

Secretary of State.

MISSION PROPOSAL

The Conference of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church is an organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Kansas according to the following charter:

PURPOSE

The purpose of this incorporation is to conduct missions, foreign as well as home missions. The carrying out of these various mission activities will be done by committees.

Foreign Mission will be taken care of by a committee consisting of nine members. This committee will be elected by the Conference at the annual sessions.

The term of service for these committee members is three years. The time of service for three of these members ends each year. They are then to be re-elected. With this arrangement there will always be a majority of experienced members.

The officers of this committee will be elected each year at the time of the Conference and will be newly elected by the committee itself. The officers are: chairman, assistant-chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

The duties of this committee are:

1. To oversee and manage all missions of the Conference; to see to it that all Conference resolutions concerning the foreign mission be carried out during the year, and to report at the annual session regarding the condition of the mission, the work during the past year, and suggestions for the future.

2. At least once a year a session should be held to conduct the business occurring in the management of foreign missions, and to plan for future work.

3. To encourage giving, mission interest, and to seek new workers.

4. The officers of this committee shall constitute an executive committee. This committee shall have the authority to act in less important matters, also when it is necessary to act quickly, if it is not possible for the entire committee to gather.

The chairman of this committee shall call the committee sessions, conduct the session, and have the oversight over all work of the committee according to the organization rules.

The vice-chairman is to take the chairman's place if the chairman is absent.

The secretary shall keep a record of all committee work and committee sessions, and keep all written documents in a safe place. At the Conference he is to give a written report of all mission work at each annual session.

The treasurer shall receive all money of the Conference which is designated for foreign mission, manage it correctly, and upon recommendation of the Conference or the committee pay it out. He should be ready at all times to give an account of his treasury to the conference at the annual session, and a summarized report.

The treasurer of this committee is also the treasurer of the conference.

Missionaries being sent out should also receive a suitable outfitting. This consists in traveling costs and necessities for the first years on the mission field. The sum for the outfitting should in every case of sending out missionaries be determined by the Conference or committee.

The committee also determines the place to which missionaries should be sent, if the Conference does not do so. However, the wish of the missionaries to be sent out should be considered as much as possible.

The support which missionaries receive annually should be decided upon by the Conference. In case of urgency the committee may support and send money. Such decisions should be presented to the Conference for their consent.

The Conference is always ready to accept bequests. It is to be recommended that brethren or sisters remember the mission when they bequeath their property. The secretary of the committee has forms and will send them free of charge to those who desire them.

MISSIONARY CANDIDATES

1. A missionary is one who is sent. The Lord is the Sender through the congregation. A brother or a sister who is considering going into mission work should be called by the Lord.

2. The Lord calls in various ways, as we know from God's Word in the calling of the prophets and the apostles. In these various calls we notice similar features. The Lord calls only such who believe in Him. These experience an inner heart preparation for the work of the Lord. During this inner preparation the voice of God calls to them "Follow Me." It becomes a reality to the person called: the Lord wants me in the work. Such brothers and sisters that are called should have a good reputation in their church as well as with those outside. They should display a willingness to work for the saving of souls, and receive a recommendation from their congregation.

The attributes mentioned in I Timothy 8:1-13 of the bishops and servants are generally also fitting for a missionary.

Missionaries should have an adequate education for their calling. They should be familiar with the Word of God and, if possible, be able to speak both the German and English languages.

THE WORK IN THE FIELD

As soon as the work in the field has progressed enough so that there are a number of workers there, an organization of the workers will take place. The Board elects one missionary as leader of the misison work on this field. The further organization will come from

the workers on the field. They shall elect a chairman for all business and conference sessions on the field. He shall report on all things to the secretary of foreign missions, and oversee the entire work of one field. He shall send all necessary recommendations regarding the work to the committee on foreign missions. The relation of the missionaries on the field to each other shall find expression in the words "Love one another," and "Have salt with you and have peace among you."

This mission proposal may be enlarged upon at every conference session, provided that two-thirds of the conference delegates present will vote in favor.

B. 13 — DOCUMENTS RELATING TO KMB-MB MERGER

RECOMMENDATION BY KRIMMER MENNONITE BRETHREN CONFERENCE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS IN 1945, APPROVED BY K.M.B. CONFERENCE AND PRESENTED TO MENNONITE BRETHREN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Foreign Mission Board recommends that the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference make an attempt to affiliate with the Mennonite Brethren Conference on foreign missions in India, Africa, China South America and other fields. — The K.M.B. Foreign Mission Board.

RECOMMENDATION OF MENNONITE BRETHREN BOARD OF REFERENCE AND COUNSEL TO GENERAL CONFERENCE IN DINUBA, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 24-29, 1945.

In answer to the request of the K.M.B. Church in the matter of affiliation in foreign mission work, the Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends: (1) That in principle we heartily welcome the affiliation desired by the K.M.B. Conference; (2) that we recommend to the Conference that it authorize the Board of Foreign Missions of the M.B. Conference to work out in detail a basis for such collaboration.

STATEMENT BY KRIMMER MENNONITE BRETHREN BOARD OF MISSIONS AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO BOARDS IN HILLSBORO, KANSAS, MAY 8, 1946.

Now that the war is over, the Foreign Mission Board, missionaries and young workers are looking with new hope to the vast unevangelized fields abroad. We have been praying for peace, and

now that it is a reality we are facing a great missionary challenge. A number of missionary candidates are either ready, or are preparing for the foreign mission field. The Lord is calling our young people to different fields of work, especially to China, India and South America. The foreign mission Board regrets that outside of north China, we have no other field to offer to those whom God is calling to preach the Gospel. The questions under consideration are:

1. How can we as a conference best reach beyond the boundaries of our present sphere of influence and work?
2. What can we as a conference do to facilitate our missionary candidates to go to the field that God calls them?

The foreign mission board acknowledges the inability to meet the great missionary challenge under the prevailing conditions.

The foreign mission board is aware of the well-established and approved work of the Mennonite Brethren Conference in India, Africa and at present is opening a new work in South America.

We are one in the fundamental doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, and have the same missionary objective, and in unity there is strength; we the Foreign Mission Board are prepared to make the following recommendation to the K.M.B. Conference.

Recommendation:

That the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference make an attempt to affiliate with the Mennonite Brethren Conference on foreign missions in India, Africa, China, South America and other fields.

Possible Working Basis:

1. That the Mennonite Brethren Conference receive Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Missionary candidates on their mission fields.
2. That the missionary candidates accepted by the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren mission board be permitted to go to the field where God had called them.
3. That the Krimmer Mennonite Foreign Mission Board support their missionaries sent to the Mennonite Brethren fields.
4. That the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference receive missionary candidates of the Mennonite Brethren Conference desiring to work on the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference fields under the same conditions.
5. That we desire mutual exchange or representation on the Foreign Mission Board of the Mennonite Brethren Conference.
6. That we suggest missionaries of the two conferences be examined to mutual satisfaction.
7. That the sacraments be practiced as heretofore.
8. That the foreign mission activities of the respective con-

ferences be considered as one work and be supported with prayers and offerings.

STATEMENT BY MENNONITE BRETHREN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS AS A BASIS FOR COLLABORATION

Be it agreed:

1. That the Board of Foreign Missions of the Mennonite Brethren Church accepts the principles of collaboration worked out by the Foreign Missions Board of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church.
2. That the missionary candidates from each conference are free to apply for foreign mission service to either Board and for any of our fields, placing their application with *that* Board under whose charge the field to which the candidate desires to go is operating, and under whom the candidate will be sent out.
3. That each conference assumes full financial responsibility for its own workers, including a prorated field building, maintenance, and operating expense.
4. That churches of either conference be open to deputation work. Offerings at such occasions flow into the mission treasury of the church which is thus visited.
5. That whenever missionary candidates or the mission work of the sister conference is under consideration, the sister conference is to be represented by one voting delegate from its mission board.

A.K. Wiens, chairman of the K.M.B. Board of Foreign Missions, responded affirmatively to this proposal on June 5, 1946.

B. 14 — KMB FOREIGN MISSIONS PRINCIPLES APPROVED AT 1958 CONFERENCE

1. Program of Foreign Missions is to be integrated with the Mennonite Brethren General Conference Board of Foreign Missions Program.
2. The M.B. accept in total our present supported missionaries.
3. That the Mennonite Brethren Conference accepts our total missionary program and that missionaries now serving under independent boards (T.E.A.M., S.I.M., M.A.F.) continue thereunder.
4. That missionaries continue to serve as long as they agree with principles and policies of the merged conferences.
5. That two members of our constituency serve on the merged

board for nine years.

6. That our K.M.B. churches accept responsibility for wholehearted support of the total missionary program.

7. After a certain specified deadline, as agreed to by both mission boards, applications for missionary service will be considered only when the applicant desires to go to the M.B. or K.M.B. fields.

8. Both mission boards will agree on a date when our K.M.B. Foreign Missions treasury will be transferred to the M.B. treasury, and thereafter our mission funds will be forwarded and entrusted to the merged treasury at Mennonite Brethren headquarters in Hillsboro.

B. 15 — DISTRIBUTION OF KMB MISSIONARIES/FINANCES IN 1954

Disbursements

PERU FIELD

Rev. and Mrs. Sylvester Dirks Allowance	\$1,629.60
Children Allowance	900.00
Personal Gifts	312.00
For Boat	<u>427.27</u>
Total	\$3,268.87
Rev. and Mrs. Joe Walter Allowance	1,629.60
Children Allowance	<u>400.00</u>
Total	2,029.60
Rev. and Mrs. Joe Walter Allowance	1,629.60
Children Allowance	150.00
Personal Gifts	372.86
Mileage	100.00
For Boat	<u>250.00</u>
Total	2,502.46
Rev. and Mrs. Paul Friesen Allowance	1,629.60
Children Allowance	135.00
Personal Gifts	<u>791.86</u>
Total	2,556.46

Station Funds	2,300.00
Bethany School	100.00
Passage, Custom and Duty for Walters and Friesens	2,481.79
Language School, House Rent, Household Goods ..	1,339.08
Passage from Lima to Atalaya for Friesens.....	<u>170.00</u>
Total.....	6,390.87
(Total for Peru \$16,748.26)	

M.B. FIELD

Rev. and Mrs. Arnold Prieb Allowance	1,455.00
Children Allowance	800.00
Gifts for Projector	90.00
Station Funds	<u>1,000.00</u>
Total.....	3,345.00

N.C. FIELD

Mrs. P.H. Siemens Allowance	814.80
Floyd Siemens Allowance	100.00
Rev. Rockford Hatten Allowance	300.00
Rev. Rondo Horton Allowance	420.00
Ticket for Mrs. P.H. Siemens	175.00
Tickets for Janet and Kay Hofer	104.55
Mileage to North Carolina for Rev. G. Classen	<u>118.40</u>
Total.....	2,032.75

MISSIONARY AVIATION FELLOWSHIP

Mrs. and Mrs. Jim Lomheim Allowance	1,680.00
Children Allowance	<u>250.00</u>
Total.....	1,930.00

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE MISSION

Rebecca Glanzer Allowance	1,160.00
Betty Ratzlaff Allowance	1,800.00
Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Munger Allowance	3,450.00
Personal Gifts	778.88
Passage	1,200.00
Mileage	<u>150.00</u>
Total.....	8,538.88

Rev. and Mrs. Clifford Ratzlaff Allowance	1,395.00
Personal Gifts	5.00
For Aluminum Room	210.00
Mileage	213.20
Passage.....	<u>59.31</u>
Total.....	1,882.51

Rev. and Mrs. Bruce Wakelin Allowance	600.00
Personal Gifts	<u>35.00</u>
Total	635.00
Dr. and Mrs. Maynard Seamen Allowance	3,024.00
Personal Gifts	45.00
Passage	<u>50.00</u>
Total	3,119.00
(Total for TEAM \$14,175.39)	

SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION

Rev. and Mrs. Virgil Kleinsasser Allowance	2,800.00
Children Allowance	250.00
Personal Gifts	<u>547.41</u>
Total	3,597.41
Linda Kasper Allowance	1,400.00
Personal Gift	10.00
Total	1,410.00
Mary Wollman Allowance	1,400.00
Helen Vetter Allowance	1,400.00
Ina King Allowance	1,400.00
Personal Gift	256.95
Total	1,650.95
Valla Vee Benedict Allowance	1,000.00
Personal Gift	5.00
Mileage	60.75
Total	1,065.75
(Total for SIM \$10,530.11)	

OTHER FUNDS PAID OUT

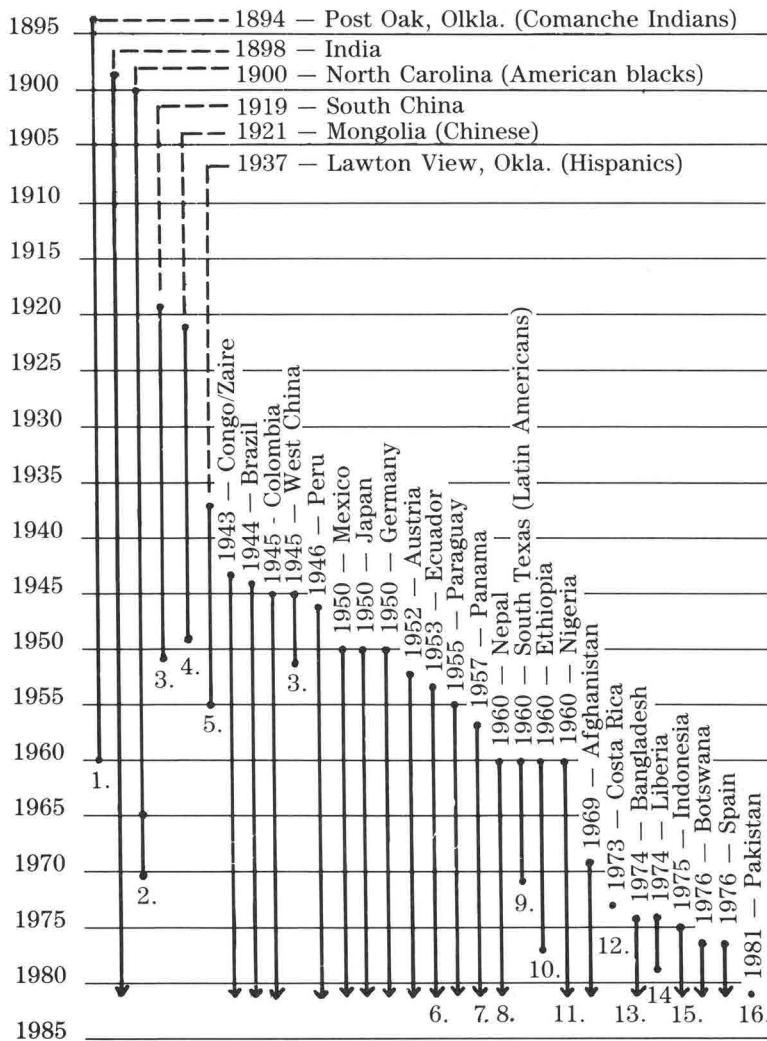
African Native Training	50.00
Slavic Gospel Association	50.00
Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association	10.00
British Foreign Bible Society	50.00
Bethany Bible Institute	5.00
American Bible Society	5.00
U.S. Treasury for Rev. Joe Walter	68.44
Brotherhood Mutual Life Insurance for	
Rev. Paul Friesen	102.49
Rev. and Mrs. Don Rubish	218.78
Crocker Anglo Bank Loan	116.57

Retirement Funds	543.60
Crocker Anglo Bank Loan	3,500.00
Pine Hill, Printing Prayer Cards	103.75
Pine Hill, Printing Letter Heads	12.70
Wm. Tschetter for "Christian witness"	
Air Mail to Missionaries	239.67
Total	5,076.00

APPENDIX D

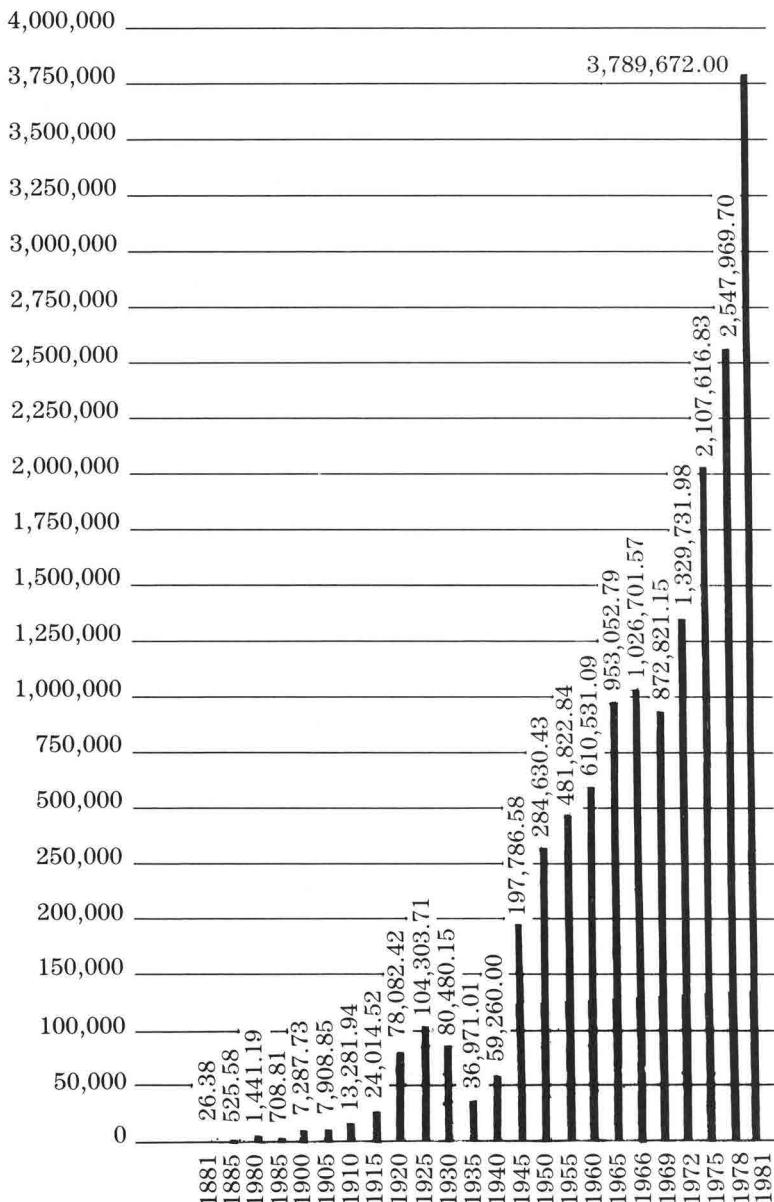
Charts and graphs

C. 1 — GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION OF MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS, 1894-1981



1. Integrated with Southern District Conference in 1958.
2. Recognized as an official district of the U.S. Conference in 1971.
3. Closed to missions in 1951. One missionary chose to stay.
4. Closed to missions in 1949.
5. Integrated with Southern District Conference in 1955.
6. Radio work with station HCJB.
7. Short-term missionary to Choco Indians in Panama begun without conference support in 1959.
8. With The Evangelical Alliance Mission.
9. Recognized as an official district of the U.S. Conference in 1971.
10. Carryover from KMB missions program with merger.
11. Carryover from KMB missions program with merger, with Sudan Interior Mission.
12. Two seminary teachers for one year.
13. With Mennonite Central Committee.
14. With Sudan Interior Mission.
15. With PIPKA (Muria Synod, begun as early as 1917).
16. With Christoffel Blindenmission.

**C. 2 — FINANCIAL RESPONSE TO MENNONITE BRETHREN
MISSIONS, 1881-1981**



**C. 3 — MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION WORKERS,
1885-1981**

YEAR	RUSSIAN MB	N. AMERICAN MB	KRIMMER MB	TOTAL MISSIONARIES	CHRISTIAN SERVICE WORKERS	TOTAL WORKERS
1885	2			2		2
1890	2			2		2
1895	2	2		4		4
1900	6	8	2	16		16
1905	10	9	4	23		23
1910	13	12	3	28		28
1915	*15	13	4	32		32
1920		24	8	32		32
1925		28	8	36		36
1930		29	7	36		36
1935		28	14	42		42
1940		31	12	43		43
1945		50	9	59		59
1950		139	13	152		152
1955		219	22	241		241
1960		**	**	256		256
1965				205		205
1966				224		224
1969				224	92	344
1972				140	91	231
1975				154	74	228
1978				152	61	213
1981				151	14	165

* Since funds could no longer be sent out of Russia, the mission of the Russian Mennonite Brethren was integrated with the American Baptist Missionary Union

**Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren merged.

C. 4 — MENNONITE BRETHREN FOREIGN MISSIONS, 1981

	When work began	We work in cooperation with	Type of work	Membership (approx.)	personnel at June 1 84
EUROPE	Austria 1951	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Austria	+ ■	254	6 M 6 GNC
	Germany 1951	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Germany	+ ■	815	12 M 2 GNC
	Spain 1976	Mennonite Brethren Church of Spain	+ ■	10	7 M 1 GNC
	U.S.S.R. 1957	Mennonite Brethren Communications (Winnipeg) via radio	○	25,000	2 M
	Afghanistan 1969	International Assistance Mission	●		2 M
	Bangladesh 1974	Mennonite Central Committee	●		1 M
ASIA	India 1889	— Mennonite Brethren Conference of India — Trans World Radio — Evangelical Fellowship of India	+ ■ ▲	25,000 +	8 M 2 CS
	Indonesia 1975	Muria Mennonite Synod	■		2 M
	Japan 1950	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Japan	+ ■	1,400	9 M 2 MAP
	Nepal 1968	The Evangelical Alliance Mission	●		2 M, 1 CS
	Pakistan 1981	Missions Services	●	2 M, 1 CS	2 M
	China 1982	China Educational Exchange	▼		2 MAP
AFRICA	Botswana 1976	Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission	■		2 M
	Nigeria	Sudan Interior Mission	▼		1 M
	Zaire 1920	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Zaire	▼ ■ ●	35,000	20 M 7 CS
	Brazil 1945	— Portuguese MB Convention — German MB Association	+ ■	1,500 1,600	13 M 4 GNC
	Colombia 1945	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Columbia	+ ■ ▼	1,100	9 M 2 GNC
	Ecuador 1953	HCJB. Gospel radio	○		3 M
LATIN AMERICA	Panama 1959	United Evangelical Church of Panama	■ ● ▲	500	2 M 3 CS
	Paraguay 1945	Spanish and German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Conferences	+ ■	1200 (G) 900 (S)	8 M 3 GNC
	Peru 1950	— Wycliffe Bible Translators — South America Mission — Swiss Indian Mission	● ■ ▲	700 (est.)	5 M 8 MAP
	Mexico 1950	— Independent church — Missions Services	+ ■ ● ▼	85	7 M
	Uruguay 1967	Mennonite Brethren Conference of Uruguay	+ ■	170	4 M, 2 FV

North America: 3 M (Sudan Interior Mission), 2 M (Missionary Aviation Fellowship).

+ Church planting evangelism
■ Theological leadership training
● Medical
▲ Agriculture Industrial development
▼ Education
○ Radio

M — Missionaries
GNC — Good News Corps
CS — Christian Services
FV — Fraternal Visitor
MAP — Missionary Assistance Program

**C. 5 — GROWTH OF MENNONITE BRETHREN MEMBERSHIP,
1966-1981**

Area	1966	1969	1972	1975	1978	1981
Africa (Zaire)	8,689	9,205	9,000 +	15,900	19,586	23,000*
Canada	15,807	16,236	17,265	18,557	19,349	22,000
Europe	188	308	455	580	825	960
India	20,148	20,000	25,000	25,000*	25,000*	25,000*
Japan	480	545	700	787	868	1,200
Russia				22,000*	22,000*	22,000*
Latin America	2,681	3,056	3,254	6,694	7,469	10,500
U.S.	14,283	15,139	16,030	16,064	16,956	18,000

*Accurate statistics not available

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FOUNDATIONS OF MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS

The Mennonite Brethren, representing a small segment of the Christian world, have been strongly involved in missionary outreach throughout their history. This volume is the exciting and challenging story of the beginnings of a mission to the world. It encompasses some 120 years during which a relatively small group of churches sought to reach around the globe with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Dr. George W. Peters is a well-known specialist in missions. He has served on the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services for many years and has helped in the formulation of many mission principles. Until recently he was Professor of Missions at Dallas Theological Seminary; now retired, he serves as consultant and speaker on missions to many groups around the world.